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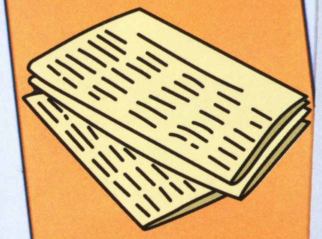
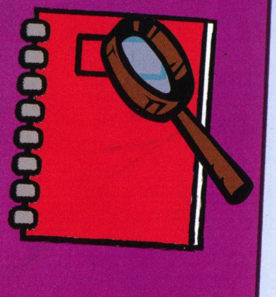


Las Noticias

1 - Latine History Month
2 - Equity Cohort Meetings
4 - Tiktok Vandalism Trends
5 - Burton Safely
6 - Invitational Equity Meetings
7 - Substitute Shortages
8 - Wellness Changes

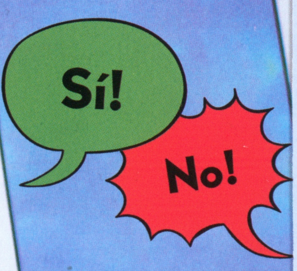


Los Reportajes Especiales

12 - Latine History Month and Historical Figures
15 - Acalanes Clubs
16 - Hunger Action Month
18 - Frosh Behavior
20 - Park Theater
22 - Dialogue On The Dons

Las Artes

34 - Latine Representation
36 - Recipe of the Issue
37 - Shang-Chi Review
38 - Short Form Content And Attention Spans
39 - Music In The Gaming Industry
40 - Fall Play Debut
41 - Artists of the Issue
42 - Quote of the Issue



Las Opiniones

24 - What Is A Don?
27 - Philanthropy And Taxes
28 - Gabby Petito
29 - The Education System
30 - Effects Of Fast Fashion

Los Deportes

43 - Rise Of Skateboarding
44 - Ruebner's Rundown
45 - Tom's Column
46 - Overlooked Sports
47 - Sports Beats
51 - Athletes Of The Issue
52 - Getting To Know Your Varsity Athletes

A Celebration of Latine Culture

Latine Heritage Month activities on campus

Fallon Emmer and Reid Aldrich | Copy Editor and Staff Writer

As students walk into Spanish class, they encounter the sound of lively music, their eyes darting around the vibrantly colored room bedecked with Latin American flags on every wall. They eagerly take their seats to delve into these beautiful cultures and their celebrations.

This month, Acalanes commemorates Latine Heritage Month school-wide by hosting activities related to Latine traditions and shining a light on the many Latine cultures that contribute to our community.

Latine Heritage Month, which starts on Sept. 15 and ends on Oct. 15, aims to celebrate the culture and contributions of the Latine community throughout the world. It also honors the independence days of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Chile, and Mexico. Now, 35 years after its initial commemoration, Acalanes celebrates Latine Heritage for the first time with a series of school-wide events.

"I think the celebration of Latine Heritage Month is long overdue, but I'm also excited that it is being celebrated. I think the celebration of this month shows our progress as a school towards being more inclusive," Latinos Unidos Club Vice President and senior Sofia Gonzalez said.

Acalanes prides itself on its work towards inclusivity. To better achieve this goal, the school plans to highlight as many of its affinity groups as possible with this celebration.

"We celebrate pride month and African-American heritage but we haven't celebrated Latine heritage, which is equally as important. I think recognizing that there are so many minority groups on campus that we need to devote time to is really important," Associated Student Body Treasurer Ava Spiegler said.

Throughout history, Latine culture has greatly influenced the United States, including California. During Latine History Month, educators strive to emphasize the importance of Latine contributions to American history and society not usually discussed in textbooks.

"It is important to point out and pay attention to the stories that haven't always been elevated. The way that our history was written, some people got more attention than others. All of our contributions need to be seen, not just some," Spanish teacher Monika Voellm said.

Teachers also stress the significance of examining many perspectives to understand a complete narrative.

"Students need to be a little bit more informed so that they can address some biases that may exist. I think that this is one of the main issues to address in terms of a lot of these celebrations," English and AP Comparative Government teacher James Muñoz said. "Are there biases, and is the celebration of that month going to just reassert some stereotypes? Is it going to be a true celebration of culture? I want there to be an understanding of why bias is harmful and to have a safe environment to have that conversation."

By learning about many aspects of Latine cultures, students can immerse themselves and learn about traditions unique to every area. In Spanish classes, students get an in-depth understanding of Latine identity within different cultures and countries.

"Our current unit is on identity, and then we are moving into a unit on community. As the month moves on, we are going to be learning about different Latine community members. We are also learning about the diversity of what Latine means in this country," Voellm said.

Acalanes Leadership and its Latinos Unidos Club planned events all month long to provide students with opportunities to learn more about Latine history and culture. Students attended events such as a potluck on Oct. 6 and a presentation by guest speaker and UC Berkeley Diversity Equity and Inclusion Assistant Dean Alberto Ledesma on Oct. 14.

"We're having a potluck and trivia. We've had a staff and student bonding, tying together the staff and the students. We want to encourage equity and representation through celebrating the minority groups on campus," Spiegler said.

The club opened these events to all students. Club members want to share their culture, speak about important topics, and welcome everyone to enjoy the celebration.

"Our goals are to raise awareness about issues facing the Latine community, both internal and external, and facilitate dialogues about these issues. We also want people to learn about and enjoy Latine culture, so along with more serious activities and topics there are some activities that are educational and fun like the potluck on Oct. 6," Gonzalez said.

Even after Latine Heritage Month, Acalanes can continue to celebrate and learn about the Latine experience. Latinos Unidos holds meetings every other Wednesday in room 507. Teachers and students alike advocate for the continuation of these conversations past Oct. 15, as the celebration of Latine heritage and the discussion on Latine issues can continue year-round.

"Everyone should learn about Latine heritage. It's a part of some of the students' culture, and we should not only be learning about the majority culture. We can begin to break apart the harmful stereotypes that influence our laws and policies, and by extension the Latine community," Gonzalez said.

EL VIOLONCELLO
EL NOPAL

Bathroom Burglary: the 'Devious' Destruction of Acalanes Bathrooms

Students vandalize campus bathrooms over new TikTok trend

Zach Snyder, Ben Brekke, and Henry Hagel | News Editor and Staff Writers

Blueprint Graphic/Liam McGlynn

After wandering the halls and wasting valuable class time, students are ecstatic to find the one bathroom that is open. But all that joy floods away as their eyes meet the sight of broken soap dispensers on the ground, apples and oranges clogging in the toilets, and missing supplies.

Under the influence of a new TikTok trend, the 'devious lick', Acalanes students vandalized bathrooms on campus, destroying different utilities with no care about the repercussions.

The trend started around the first week of September, right as school began for many students across the country. Students stole items of value from their schools, mostly bathrooms including soap dispensers, sink handles, and even urinals. They then posted their acts of vandalism on TikTok and received millions of likes and views. However, to many Acalanes students, the trend seemed extreme and that it would not reach Acalanes.

"I've seen it on my phone a lot, and even I thought it was funny when I first saw it, but I didn't know it was going to be affecting schools. I didn't think students were going to be doing this [around the country]," sophomore Aiden Yates said.

When the 'devious licks' began, Acalanes students replicated what they saw on TikTok, mainly targeting the boys' bathrooms. As the week progressed, student damage escalated to thoroughly destroying facilities. At this point, the administration took unprecedented action.

"We tried to get a handle on it at the beginning," Campus Supervisor Andy McDonald said. "Then when it got to the point where it got too bad we just started locking up bathrooms. [Students] really left us no choice."

Many students, especially upperclassmen, assumed that the perpetrators of this vandalism were generally freshmen. However, this trend is not limited to a specific student group or grade.

"Many people think the perpetrators are ninth graders, but I also have suspicions about other groups and individuals on campus. We also believe that many of our younger students are struggling more with the general behavioral norms of being on a high school campus because of the pandemic and lack of experience," Associate Principal Mike Plant said.

The 'devious lick' trend extends beyond the limit of Acalanes. Middle schoolers joined in to tally up views and likes on TikTok, including students at Stanley Middle School. While the incidents are not nearly as malicious there, the trend is still prominent among students.

"It has been more destructive than in the past and includes breaking the soap and towel dispensers," Stanley Principal Betsy Balmat said. "We have not had an increase in theft but the bathroom destruction has been notable."

Students caught vandalizing the bathrooms at Stanley faced a series of punishments and Stanley continues to limit restroom occupancy.

"We have given consequences to students for this behavior and it includes communication with parents, apologies to the custodian and maintenance staff, and a great deal of campus cleaning. We focus more on improving the community through cleaning and repair, rather than financial reparation," Balmat said.

The inconveniences this trend creates on campus frustrates many Acalanes students and disappoints the Acalanes community as it reflects a poor image on all students.

"I think this kind of hurts [our image], it paints us in a pretty poor light that the students are willing to actually vandalize the school [because it] all costs money, and it's extra work for the janitors to replace things," sophomore Jack Miller said.

The consequences to these acts of vandalism have cut off students' access to clean, well-functioning bathrooms. However, the effects of these 'devious licks' go much deeper than staining the image of Acalanes. Custodians and staff at Acalanes feel disrespected and unappreciated when these acts occur.

"[The vandalism] affected [our work] too much because we usually have an extra person, named Ms. Cecilia, and her work is checking the bathrooms," Custodian Edgar Gonzalez said. "Before it would take her 20 minutes to clean the bathroom, and now it's taking 45 minutes to clean a bathroom. That's not acceptable, they are making us work more than what we are supposed to do."

Due to the impacts on its custodial staff and on its facilities, Acalanes administration changed its policies regarding bathroom use and staff supervision.

"We have increased our staffing at lunchtimes and asked teachers to tighten up bathroom and break policies. What is a shame is that, if this continues, we will have to take actions that would penalize many, such as shutting down certain areas of campus during lunch, because of the actions of few," Plant said.

While administration cannot discuss details regarding specific students, Acalanes continues to investigate the vandalism with the help of the police.

"Anyone caught vandalising school property will be subject to progressive discipline and possible police contact," Plant said.

After weeks of vandalism in schools throughout the nation, TikTok announced that it would ban 'devious lick' videos from its platform as they violated community guidelines. TikTok community guidelines explicitly state that "criminal activities cover a wide spectrum of acts punishable by law, including theft. To prevent such behavior from being normalized, imitated, or facilitated, [TikTok] removes content that promotes or enables criminal activities."

Although the trend is on the downturn, the repercussions are still apparent. Across the campus, sink faucets are still missing, toilets are still clogged, and the reconstruction of the bathrooms is underway.

According to Plant, reconstruction of the campus bathrooms will cost upward of $10,000. While the Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD) schools have the funds to repair this destruction, other schools across the country are less fortunate and must deal with the effects for a prolonged period of time.

"I think the value of a dollar is probably different depending on where you are," McDonald said. "I think that when kids are doing this they are probably not concerned about how much it's going to cost or how much work time it's going to take to get everything repaired because I think if they did they would probably think twice about it because it's not a cheap repair."

In addition to the monetary cost of refurbishing Acalanes, many see these acts of vandalism as ignorant as students demonstrate a lack of appreciation for Acalanes and its resources.

"The country that we come from, we didn't have a school like this, but here we have everything for the students, yet they don't appreciate it," Gonzalez said. "There are a lot of people that wish that they can have a school like this. To have everything, to wash [their] hands. In some countries and places they don't have soap to wash their hands, they have to eat their lunch without washing their hands, they just have water which isn't as effective. And you guys have everything, you have soap dispensers, sanitizers. I just feel kind of sad while in this position, because we have everything, and we just don't appreciate it."

To prevent future acts of vandalism and theft, student groups and staff currently plan to educate the student population and create a united Acalanes community.

"We are working with student groups and teachers to provide some programming around AHS school pride and how we 'show up' for each other," Plant said. "Education is better than consequence."

While certain anomalies presented themselves with the 'devious licks', a great number of students and staff cherish the Acalanes campus and hate to see these acts of vandalism tear it apart.

"I wish kids would respect the property of the campus. People that work here and the majority of the kids that go here really love and respect our campus, I mean I do, and we like to keep it up nice. It is a nice place to be, it's a nice place to work, it's a nice place to go to school, and we want to keep it that way," McDonald said.

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Parents Push for a Safer Burton Valley

Burton Valley divides over new safety measures

Saylen Cardoni and Zubin Acuña | Staff Writers

It is a sunny day in Burton Valley and children walk to and from school with smiles on their faces chatting with friends, oblivious to their busy surroundings. However, this sunny scene can change in an instant with a single distracted pedestrian and a misdirected car.

Over the past months, the Burton Valley community has seen a large push for increased safety measures on the roads, as hundreds of residents have taken time to sign and express support for Burton Safely's petition to add a full-time protected path in the area among other protective measures.

Burton Safely is a part of a four-year battle for increasing safety measures in Lafayette, and support for the movement is substantially growing in the wake of three fatal accidents in the past year.

"We purposely bought a house so that our kids could walk and bike to school. But pretty soon, we learned that it was not nearly as safe as the real estate agents told us," Burton Safely parent Jennifer Liebermann said. "Burton Valley is the only school in the city of Lafayette that does not have at least half a mile of a sidewalk or protected pathway. And so that's really why we started doing it."

In such a busy neighborhood as Burton Valley, the morning rush-hour period crowds the streets with young students and parents navigating their way to school and work.

"People are going to work, kids are going to school so there's a lot of young kids walking in the traffic lanes while people are trying to rush and get to work," Burton Valley resident Adam Winig said.

Many Acalanes students who live in Burton Valley agree that the rush-hour commute before and after school creates a dangerous environment for pedestrians, bikers, and young children.

"Kids walking or biking to school can have a hard time navigating the streets due to parked cars cluttering up the road," junior James Cortez said.

Burton Safely looks to solve this problem with the use of an enclosed pedestrian path that students can use on the way to school. Additional proposals include parking restrictions and speed bumps in the neighborhood.

"We wanted to focus on safety for everyone in the community, so not just kids, but seniors, dog walkers, and you know, people who just want to get exercise," Liebermann said.

Such proposals as the speed bumps would slow down cars that regularly exceed the speed limit in Burton Valley.

"People call Silverado [Drive] the Silverado Speedway. I think everybody is very clear that cars drive too fast," Liebermann said.

Another proposed solution to the issue of speeding is increasing the presence of law enforcement in the areas where speeding is most common. However, law enforcement is very expensive, and changing driving habits has proven to be very difficult even with stricter laws and punishments.

"I think parents also need to talk to their kids who are biking and walking to school and talk to them about proper safety, looking both ways before you cross the street, checking before you switch onto the other side of the road," junior Nathan Kim said.

The Burton Safely protected path faced pushback from the community and has come to a pause at Lafayette City Council Meetings.

"I think the theme song from the city of Lafayette is deny, deflect and delay," Liebermann said.

Some residents believe that a protected path could upset the layout of Burton Valley and that similar solutions could be more viable.

"[Just having speed bumps] would be far more cost-effective, resolve many of the apparent problems raised by some, and be self-enforcing and not spoil the character of our neighborhood," Burton Valley resident Bill Falkson wrote in a Public Correspondence regarding Burton Valley safety measures.

The proposed path would take up much of the road space residents have previously used for parking. While the city of Lafayette has not approved the protected path, it authorized certain roads in Burton Valley for restricted parking on Aug. 26.

"Blocking off one side of the road permanently will become a hassle for homeowners on that side who can no longer park their cars in front of their homes," Cortez said.

However, residents still recognize the dangers of unsafe drivers in Burton Valley.

"With how fast people drive it's definitely a cause for concern and it's definitely a real possibility that my younger brother could get hit," Cortez said.

BURTON
SAFELY

Blueprint Photo/Zubin Acuña

Student Leaders Meet to Discuss Campus Culture

Recent events spark a need for student leadership

Juliet Becker | Online Feature Editor

During a chaotic year and a half in the COVID-19 pandemic, students have faced the loss of regular in-person instruction, social interaction, and the high school experience. Since so many are unacclimated to high school culture upon the return to in-person school, they look to their peers for guidance.

Associate Principal Andrea Powers and Ethnic Studies and Leadership teacher Katherine Walton hosted a conference in the Acalanes library on Sept. 22 with student leaders on campus to discuss leadership and school culture.

Teachers and staff members on campus identified certain students as prominent leaders for extracurricular activities and athletics. They requested that these students attend and assist in leading the meeting.

“It was fall athletes, captains, mainly it was class officers. It was some reps from Blueprint and reps from choir, some reps from drama, some of our influential club leaders were there. Our pep band leaders were there,” Walton said. “We tried to really gather names from adults on campus so that we had this comprehensive group that really spread their wings in different directions.”

The meeting shed a positive light on how student leadership can benefit Acalanes culture and how Dons can support each other.

“The climate was incredibly positive. It was a variety of student leaders from tenth through twelfth graders who were engaging in dialogue around things that were happening on campus and ways to show up for each other and support our community,” principal Eric Shawn said.

Some student attendees at the meeting believe that it took place to restore a healthy community in light of recent disrespectful incidents on campus.

said. “They did the meeting to bring to light how to help and change our culture to support each other and to have students show up and support the community.”

Since many freshmen have not attended school in a traditional setting since their seventh-grade year, they may not be adjusted to the expected standard of Acalanes behavior.

“I believe the meeting was held in the first place because there has been a major issue with not knowing how to act on campus. We believe this was happening because people haven’t been on campus in-person for basically two years,” varsity football captain and senior Evan Malmquist said.

However, the meeting had a history that expanded beyond this year’s incidents.

“A couple of years ago, Ms. Powers and I ran a very similar group where the whole theme was around ‘Dons show up’. It was a group of student leaders who really took it under their wing to talk about ‘What does that mean?’ ‘What does that look like?’ ‘How do we, in our own circles, have those dialogues?’” Walton said.

According to Walton, the meetings from two years ago had a noticeable effect on campus culture, fulfilling the goal to enhance Acalanes spirit.

“So we wanted to run [the meetings] again, because I think feedback from students from two years ago was ‘this is really needed’ and ‘we could feel the effects of it,’” Walton said.

At the meeting, the group discussed different ways to support all communities on campus. Campus leaders noted the imbalance of student attendance at certain events and came together to promote other peers’ activities.

“I know that it sucks when people don’t come to your game. So instead of making a pact of hey, for example, ‘Volleyball team, you go to all of the water polo games’ and, ‘Water polo you go to all of the girls’ volleyball,’” Manzone said. “I made the chat for every sports captain to tell the chat when their games are and all the captains tell their teams and all the teams go and support because the more, the merrier.”

The organizers encouraged the attendees to show up for each others’ events to show support for their fellow Dons.

“We kind of have gone with this phrase, like ‘Aca moments’... an Aca moment could be as simple

Continued on 7

So where are you on the compass?
?
?

Blueprint Graphic/Arlyne Noguera

Equity Lessons Return to Acalanes

Students experience equity cohort dialogues in-person for the first time

Asher Meklin | Copy Editor

Over the past six years, topics of equity and diversity have moved to the forefront of District conversations. The goal for a more equitable school atmosphere is a work in progress for the District, but helped by the institution of Equity Cohorts in the District schools.

Starting with its first meeting on Sept. 17, the Acalanes Union High School District renewed its approach with Equity Cohorts to educate students and provide a more inclusive school atmosphere.

During the 2020-2021 school year, Acalanes implemented a new program of cohorts that discussed topics primarily surrounding race and ethnicity. These Cohort meetings occurred every Monday morning over Zoom. This year, the Equity Cohorts Academies proceeded with the Academies with some changes.

One of the main differences in this year's Equity Cohorts is the leadership; last year, an outside consultant, Dr. Lori Watson, designed the cohorts. This year, the Director of Equity and Inclusion, Dr. Lynnā McPhatter-Harris, creates the lessons in collaboration with teachers.

"I think she has the ability to be a little bit more hands-on on the ground with staff and students," Leadership advisor and Ethnic Studies teacher Katherine Walton said.

The Equity Cohort lessons will occur six times throughout the 2021-2022 school year, with two lessons occurring in the first semester and four in the second. The lessons will educate students on race, ethnicity, identity, privilege, and LGBTQ+ identity.

The first cohort lesson served as an introduction for the cohort lessons to come, as well as building community in students' fourth-period classes. The lesson received mostly positive reactions from the Acalanes community.

"It felt better because it was in person," senior Jonathan Xiang said. "It felt a lot easier to pay attention to."

This year's first cohort was also the first cohort held in person, which had a major impact on students' experiences. To many students last year, Zoom proved to isolate them from each other and their teachers, making it difficult for students to actually engage in the discussions at hand.

"One of the pieces of feedback I've heard from both students but also adults, just about last year, was that it was quiet and there wasn't a ton of dialogue over Zoom during those Equity Cohorts." Walton said. "And I think you could look at that with different lenses, of either people were processing, people were thinking, or people were unengaged."

The disconnect due to Zoom led to many members of the community feeling that the cohorts were not connecting with students.

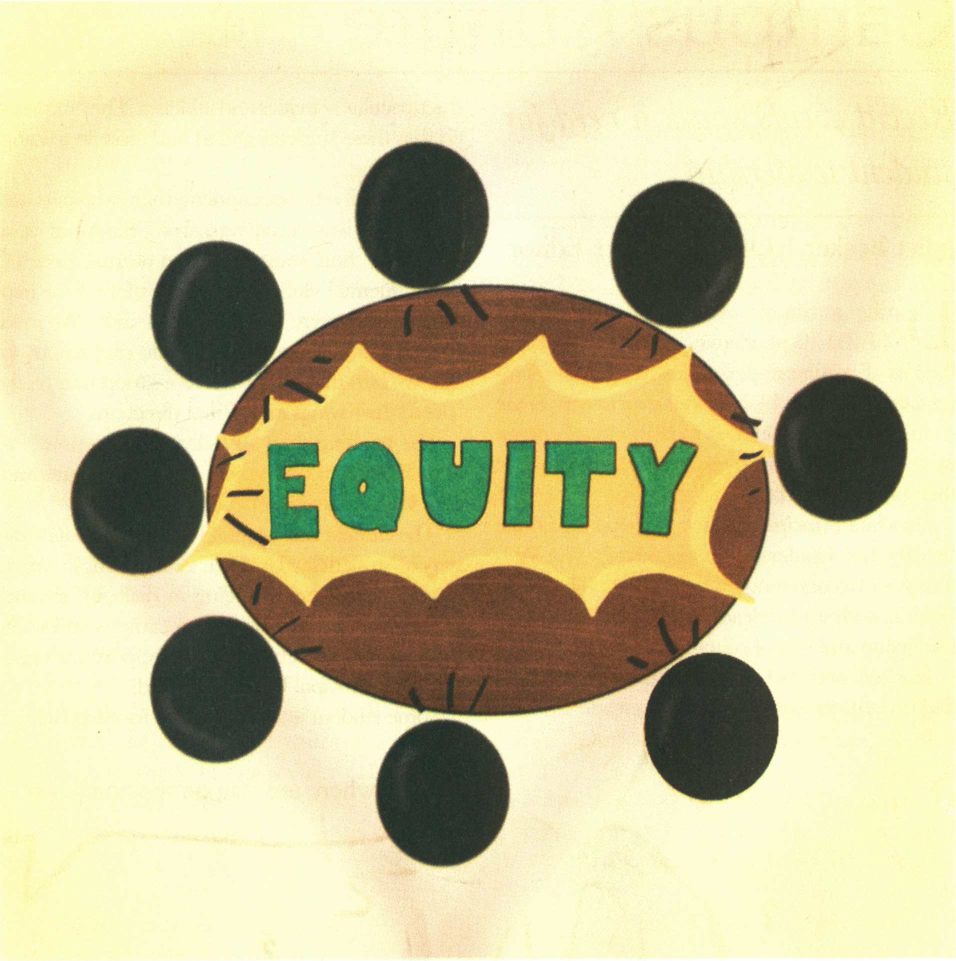
"I think most people were disengaged," sophomore Elijah Velasquez said. "I really think most people just didn't care, probably just because they were distracted and didn't pay attention to it."

To maximize attention paid to the equity lessons in-person year, the District plans to rework certain aspects of the curriculum to engage students more.

"I'm taking [previous lessons], and revamping them based on the student leadership across all five of the schools," Dr. Harris said. "And getting feedback about what worked about the lessons last year, what was missing, what they wanted more of."

The Equity Cohorts were created to educate Acalanes students about privilege and oppression, as well as influence Acalanes' environment to make it a more inclusive and welcoming place. It remains unclear as to the extent of their impact, but many are optimistic about the potential of the cohorts.

"I believe that this is making an impact and I think it's going to do so," Athletics Director Randy Takahashi said. "And I think that [the cohorts are] an example of how in a moment we are able to have that conversation and change the direction of what's going on."



Blueprint Graphic/Melaney Noguera

Acalanes Faces a Severe Shortage of Substitute Teachers

Teachers juggle substituting and their own lesson plans

Kiran Foster and Jake Boselli | Staff Writers

Teaching one subject to high school students for six periods a day is tough already, but this year, some teachers have the extra work of filling in for other teachers at times.

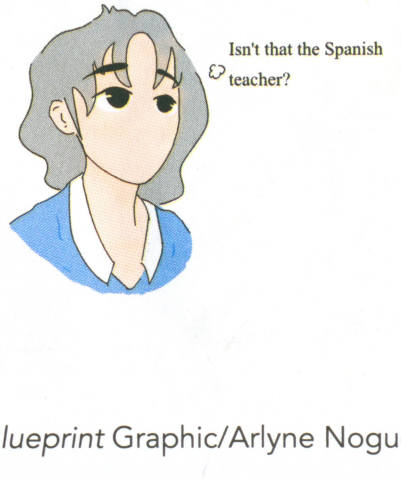
Acalanes teachers are filling in for other teachers this year due to a district-wide substitute teacher shortage.

The shortage began during the pandemic. With online learning, substitutes were rarely needed since remote classes allowed teachers to log-on from any location. For the distance learning period, substitute teachers were absent from education.

"Well I think that a lot of the subs are elderly and when we came back to school part time in March my perspective and opinion are that there was a fear of getting sick," Human and Social Development and AP Environmental Science teacher Jada Paniagua said.

Along with the hardships of COVID-19, substitute faculty have had a year and a half with a lack of jobs and low pay.

"I also think because it isn't an available job for a year and a half a lot of people who depended on sub work for their income probably found other ways to make money," Paniagua said.


Isn't that the Spanish teacher?

Blueprint Graphic/Arlyne Noguera

Substituting poses a lot of challenges, especially the limited notice. Financial factors are also a major aspect in picking the right job.

"People are just looking for a job that pays well enough and the sub pay isn't terrible, but I am making about half of what I made as a full-time teacher," Substitute teacher Anthony West said.

Substitute pay is low compared to a full-time teacher, however full-time teachers make much less than the average professional.

"Compared to many professionals we make much less, and so when someone looks at our job compared to anyone else and knows they can make 50 percent more than twice as much doing another job it's hard to make the choice to be a teacher," Paniagua said.

This school year, teachers are substituting for other classes during their prep periods due to the lack of substitute teachers. Many teachers and administrators find this unsustainable, as teachers need to prepare their lessons and grade assignments.

"Teachers are having to period sub a lot, so if you have a prep period you have to give that up and be in someone else's class," West said.

As the substitute shortage continues to pose challenges to teachers, the District attempts to find a variety of solutions to the issue.

"The District is actively trying to hire more substitutes, and has raised the substitute pay I believe, but this does not seem to be a problem that is easily resolved," Associate Principal Mike Plant said.

Teachers especially feel that the lack of substitute teachers is having an effect on their everyday teaching.

"One of the things that happens and I don't know if you know this but there isn't a sub to cover a teacher than other teachers are asked to cover those classes, and I know myself and my other colleagues are happy to sub but there are some days where I have to make copies or I have to set up a lab in my classroom and so I can't sit and work in another classroom," Paniagua said.

Because the District can't fix this problem at a moment's notice, Acalanes is managing the problem one step at a time. Plenty of people know about the lack of substitutes, but most don't understand the severity of the situation.

"I talked to the sub coordinator when I subbed at Campo the other day, and it sounds like there are around 18 subs for the entire district," West said.

While the District and administration work to find other solutions, they remain grateful to teachers who have stepped up during this time of great need.

"Acalanes teachers have been wonderful at covering for their colleagues absences, volunteering their time so that students have the appropriate supervision. I really want to thank the Acalanes staff for that," Plant said.

Campus Culture

Continued from 5

as you go to the girls' volleyball game for the first five minutes as they do introductions, just to show support because you might not have time to go for the whole hour and that's okay. Or you show up for the football stands on Saturday morning because [the] custodial [staff] is overworked and understaffed, right?" Walton said.

However, "Aca moments" go beyond the limits of the Acalanes campus.

"Some ideas that came up from [meetings] are like, 'What do these Aca moments look like in the wider community outside of school?' We see students doing interesting things for the city of Lafayette, there was recently an equity summit sort of conversation at the [Lafayette] library that some of our students participated in," Shawn said.

Adults also joined in on the conversation to promote a better Acalanes culture.

"Some of the conversations that we've been having with our teaching staff, from the beginning of the school year, involved really looking at the social, emotional wellness of our students in class. So looking at connection and relationships and ways to build that into their curriculum, I think they're continuing that work," Shawn said.

Acalanes administration advocates for greater community engagement to establish a sense of togetherness.

"Something like sixteen hundred people call [Acalanes] their home on a Monday through Friday daily basis, sometimes even onto the weekends. And so I think all of us figuring out the things that we need to do to feel connected to each other and connected to this place and show up to take care of each other. And this place requires all of us," Shawn said.

Changes to the Wellness Center

New hours and limitations made to provide proper care for students

Lulu Levy, Abbey Palmer, and Melina Nath | Staff Writers

Within the crowd of the Acalanes school environment lies a safe haven tucked away behind the 100-wing. The Wellness Center became a popular destination for students during the transition to full in-person instruction, causing the once-quiet space to evolve into a full-time service for students seeking support.

The Acalanes Wellness Center, a place for student emotional guidance, recently updated its protocols as of Sep. 27 to account for a sudden influx of students seeking support.

A spotlight falls on the critical task of balancing mental health and academics as students return to campus full time. Due to the influx of students struggling with the return to school, Wellness aims to accommodate all students coming into the space. In the first month and a half of the school year, 115 different students participated in 410 in-class Wellness visits. This excludes the ten to forty out-of-class visitors that have visited the Wellness Center.

While Wellness staff encourages students to continue stopping by, personal support is difficult to provide in a crowded environment.

"When people come in, we [want to] actually intervene and do something for students' mental health and also be able to get people back to their classes if that is something they are able to do," Wellness Coordinator Allen Choi said.

The Wellness Center now closes for the first 15 minutes of class and 30 minutes after lunch unless a student has a scheduled therapy appointment, which students or Wellness staff must reserve ahead of time. Regarding drop-in appointments, a maximum of three students can come in at a time. After students' 15 to 20-minute cooldown is up, students may see their school counselor for further support.

"We made these changes to the Wellness Center because it was just getting unmanageable. When people would come in here, they would just sit and hang out, and we would hope that they could self-regulate and get themselves back to class," Wellness Intake Specialist Kiara Thomas said.

These changes enable the Wellness staff to more effectively support students by providing proper mental health counseling in a short time so students can quickly return to class.

"Teachers want [students] in class. If you're out of class for a long time and you're coming in here a lot, it makes teachers less willing to let people come to the Wellness Center," Thomas said.

Wellness staff believes these changes will improve the quality of care they are able to provide in the space.

"Being able to better support students and better to provide [the] mental health interventions; that's [what] we want to do rather than just being a place where people can just come but we can't help them," Choi said. "I am hoping that this can give us the capacity to actually meet with people, even in this center at least have more intimate conversations and be able to assess people better."

These changes to the Wellness Center caused mixed reactions within the student body.

"I think that the changes are going to make it a little bit harder now that you can't just go in whenever you want to go in, but I think if you can find a time to go in then it's worth the extra space and privacy," sophomore Jace Bowler said.

The changes to the Wellness Center also separate students who misuse the space to get out of class from those who need support.

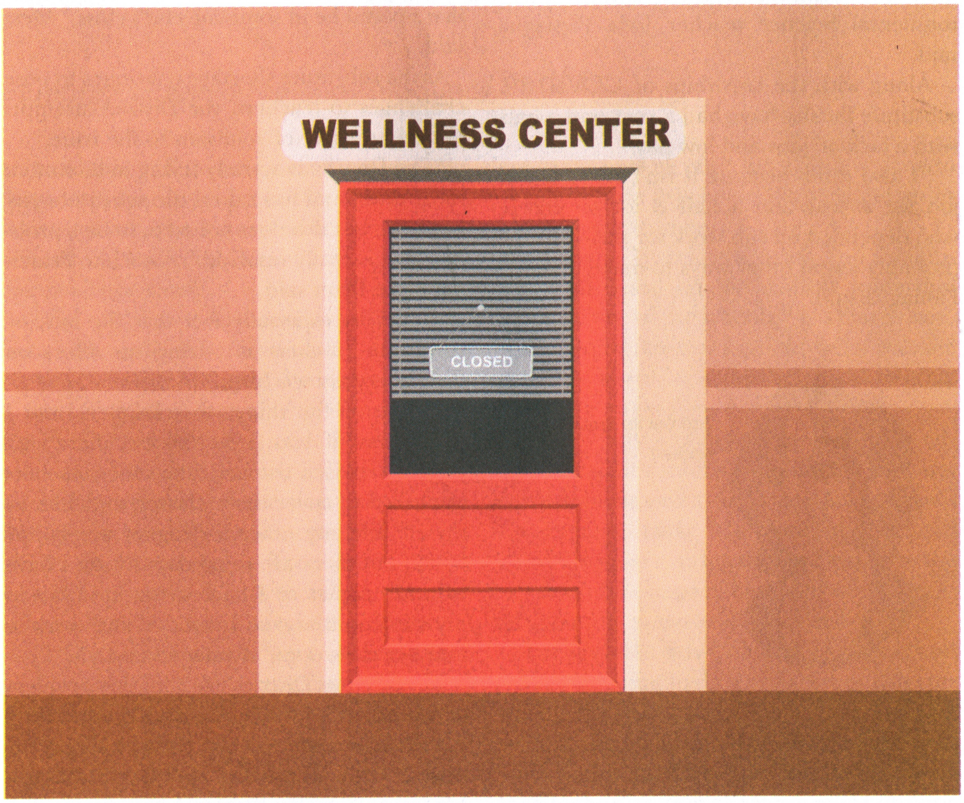
"I don't mind the changes at all, I think it was sophomore year they were doing a similar thing as closing 15 minutes before," senior Kiera Burrows said. "Although, I feel as though a lot of students who are in need of a space during that time who are not just going as they want to skip class could benefit from having the space still. This should be allowed if a student is having more trouble than just not wanting to or feeling anxious about going to a class rather than a space for students having panic or anxiety attacks or even feeling under the weather."

The flood of students entering the center compromises the privacy and quiet space Wellness strives to provide. However, students worry that with these changes, Wellness will not be available during unprecedented times.

"Mental health is not something you can just put on pause and I think that the Wellness Center should be open to students all the time. There is no way of controlling situations where you need to go to the Wellness Center," sophomore Anna MacLeod said.

Although appointments allow Wellness staff to prepare for incoming students, some students still struggle to access the Wellness Center.

"I have almost gone to Wellness before, and then it was closed. Sometimes when I try to



Blueprint Photo/Freschtta Warres

go, something has just happened to me that I couldn't have predicted, so the fact that I have to schedule my appointments is sometimes frustrating," sophomore Gabe Gardner said.

Like students, the Wellness staff also feels pressure from the return to school. Thomas grasps the full responsibility of handling drop-in students, which has occasionally included a count of more than eight students at one time.

"Honestly, it's really hard to manage when we have a lot of people in here. I'm new too, I started when the school year started. It was really difficult for me and I didn't necessarily know what I was supposed to do," Thomas said.

Wellness staff prompts students in dire need of support to take further action beyond dropping into the center. Contrary to the past full of drop-in students, the new regulations provide space for quality therapy appointments.

"If it is something that is more serious going on, they shouldn't just be coming to the Wellness Center for a cool down. They really should be having some scheduled appointments with at least maybe one of our wellness interns or me to have a deeper, more private conversation. We can then look at what we can do either in the school or outside the school," Choi said.

With these new changes, the Wellness staff hopes to return to the quiet and organized environment they seek to create for students to feel welcomed and supported.

"I feel like the main misconception is that we don't want [students] to come to wellness, but that's not the case. We just want to be able to serve more students and serve them more effectively." Thomas said.

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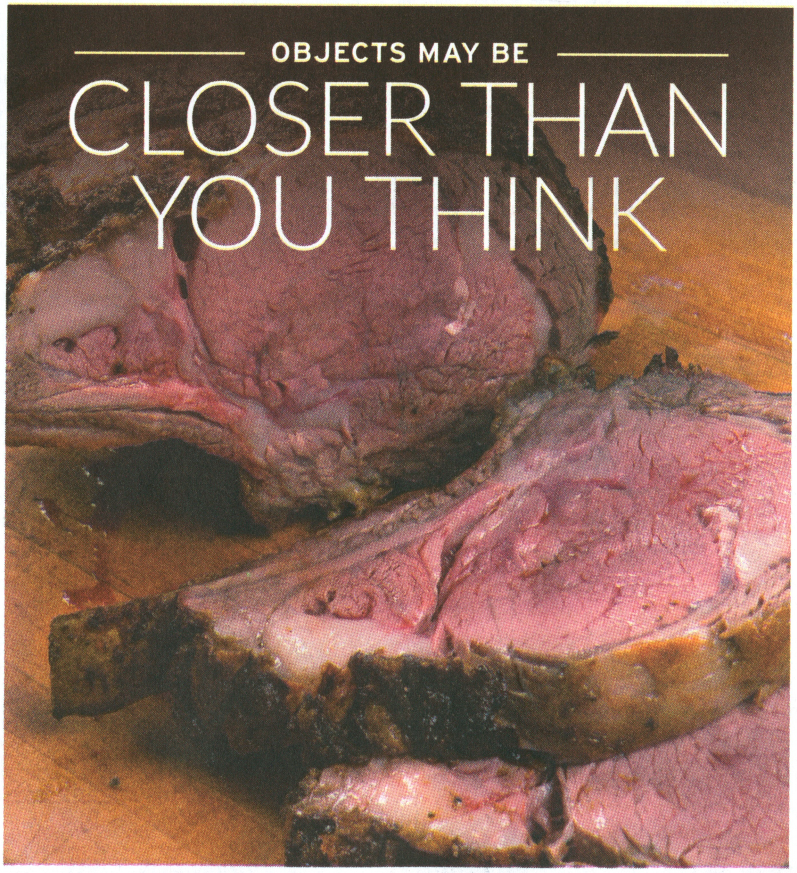

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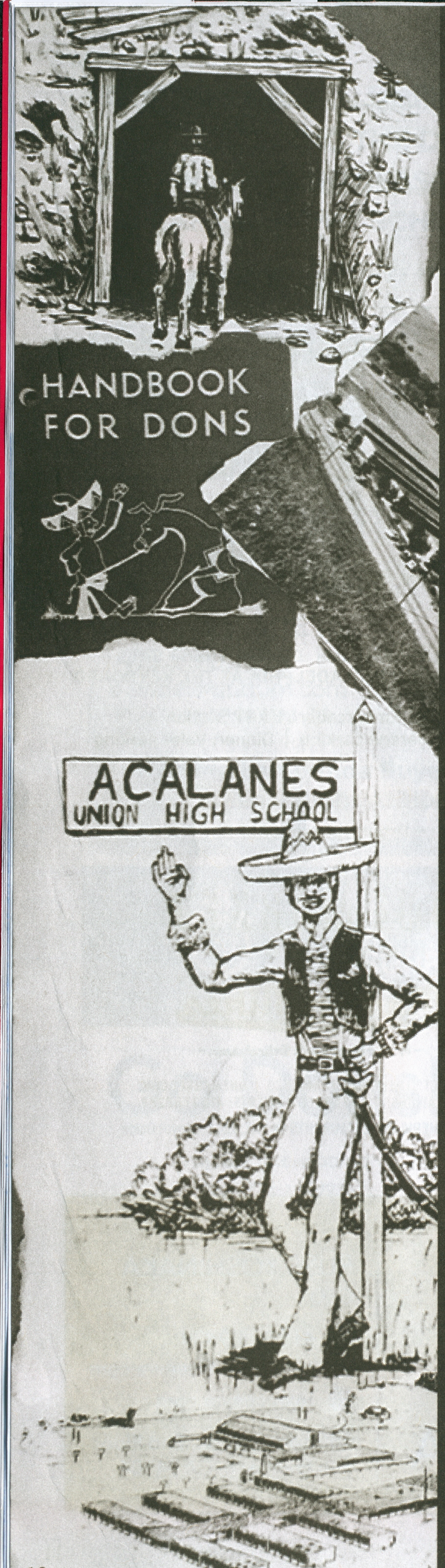


Feature

The U.S. Footprint Across Latine History

An in-depth look into Latine history not typically taught in school curriculum

By Erin Hambidge | Opinion Editor

As students and staff reflect on the injustices suffered by Latin American countries at the hands of the U.S., Blueprint notes that these historical events are challenging to tell with all sides and perspectives included. Just like our mission to amplify unheard voices in our community, the purpose of this article is to highlight an alternate perspective not taught in history classes.

As teachers decorate their doors with prominent Latin-American figures and vibrant flags flutter through the halls, students and staff celebrate a deeper appreciation of Latine History Month.

To truly acknowledge the complexities of many Latine nations' past, the Acalanes community sheds light on events and perspectives absent from many textbooks.

Many students familiar with American and European history are familiar with the phrase "history is written by the victors", a reference to the historical revisionism that often portrays the other countries in an inferior light to current world powers. This perspective often dominates the account of American history and extends to Latin American countries that face underrepresentation in many schools' curriculum.

Many people believe that this underrepresentation stems from an insufficient amount of credit granted to the Latine people who played a role in shaping U.S. history.

"When I took high school U.S. History, there were things that were not covered that I later learned about when I was in college that seemed pretty important, which included Latinos and Latinas contributing to U.S. History," Advanced Placement (AP) U.S. History teacher Bruno Morlan said.

While more inclusive tellings of history have gained ground in recent years, Morlan thinks that the larger structure of the U.S. History curriculum focuses on the white man's perspective.

"Traditional U.S. History curriculum has focused largely on politics. And because the history of who has the right to vote and hold office, has mostly focused on white males," Morlan said. "There are other strands of history that have become more popular and given the focus on the contributions of other groups of people that started in the twentieth century so social historians are looking at the contributions of women, economic historians are looking at the contributions of people who are in the lower classes."

Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico first became a U.S. territory in 1898 after the Spanish-American war, when Spain ceded it to the U.S. in the Treaty of Paris.

"It was part of the deal for the treaty to end the war that gave [the U.S.] Guam and Puerto Rico as well as our buying of the Philippines and making Cuba independent," U.S. History and Contemporary Issues and Public Policy teacher Brian Smith said.

Despite U.S. control over Puerto Rico, the U.S. never granted it the status of statehood, making Puerto Rico a commonwealth instead. The designation between a state and commonwealth is small, but commonwealths are typically regarded as a territory with local autonomy that joined with the U.S. voluntarily. Puerto Rico's status as a commonwealth prevents its citizens from having the same rights as most U.S. citizens.

"[Puerto Rican citizens] don't have the same status as statehood. They don't have electors that elect Presidents. They don't have a senator or two state senators. They don't have a representative other than one that just observes in Congress," Smith said.

In recent years, the debate over whether or not Puerto Rico should achieve statehood gained traction as more Puerto Rican citizens spoke up about the benefits that statehood would provide.

"I think there is a fair amount of people in Puerto Rico that would like to see statehood because it does set you up and gives you representation in the government with the other citizens. It also makes you eligible for all kinds of federal money and aids and programs," Smith said.

Beyond issues of representation, Puerto Rico's status as a commonwealth often contributes to the perception that citizens of the territory are secondary to the 50 states.

"[Puerto Ricans] are often treated as second-class citizens most of the time. The last hurricane they went through they are still cleaning up from and they did not get the same amount of help and relief that a state would get because of the federal programs that are limited for them," Smith said.

Mexican American War

One of the long-term causes of the Mexican American War was the larger ideological concept of Manifest Destiny, which led America to expand west into Mexican and Native American territory.

"Long-term causes of the war could be ascribed to Manifest Destiny, which was this drive that the United States had to basically link the country coast to coast, no matter whether the land was occupied or governed by other entities in between such as the Mexican government or such as the Native American population," World History and AP Comparative Government teacher Joseph Schottland said.

Manifest Destiny also played a role in the end of the war in 1848, where Mexico turned over half of its territory to the US, achieving America's goal to extend its influence out west.

"[Mexico] was forced to turn over the land that we, as a country, coveted in order to fulfill this Manifest Destiny. They weren't in a position to say no but to make ourselves feel better about it, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was arranged for a certain amount of money to exchange hands," Schottland said.

The Mexicans living on the lost land faced displacement and questionable citizenship status long after the war ended.

"There were a lot of Mexicans living on that land and that was one of the big questions: what are those Mexicans now? Are they Mexican nationals or are they American citizens?" Schottland said.

Today, U.S. curriculums often teach the war from a single perspective, glorifying Americans' actions.

"Well, I think it's been taught for a very long time as portraying Mexicans as bad and Americans as good. I don't think you can portray it as Mexicans good and Americans bad though. Mexico was being run as a dictatorship. So that's not good, but I don't think that the United States' hands are clean on this and I think that they were looking to grab territory and they saw that as a way to grab territory," Schottland said.

Guatemala and Chile in the Cold War

U.S. History classes often discuss the Cold War in relation to proxy wars and satellite nations, which are conflicts that America and the Soviet Union fought in other countries. The curriculum typically chronicles the conflicts of the U.S. and the Soviet Union in satellite nations such as Guatemala and Chile. However, classes rarely emphasize the impacts of the Cold War on the satellite nations.

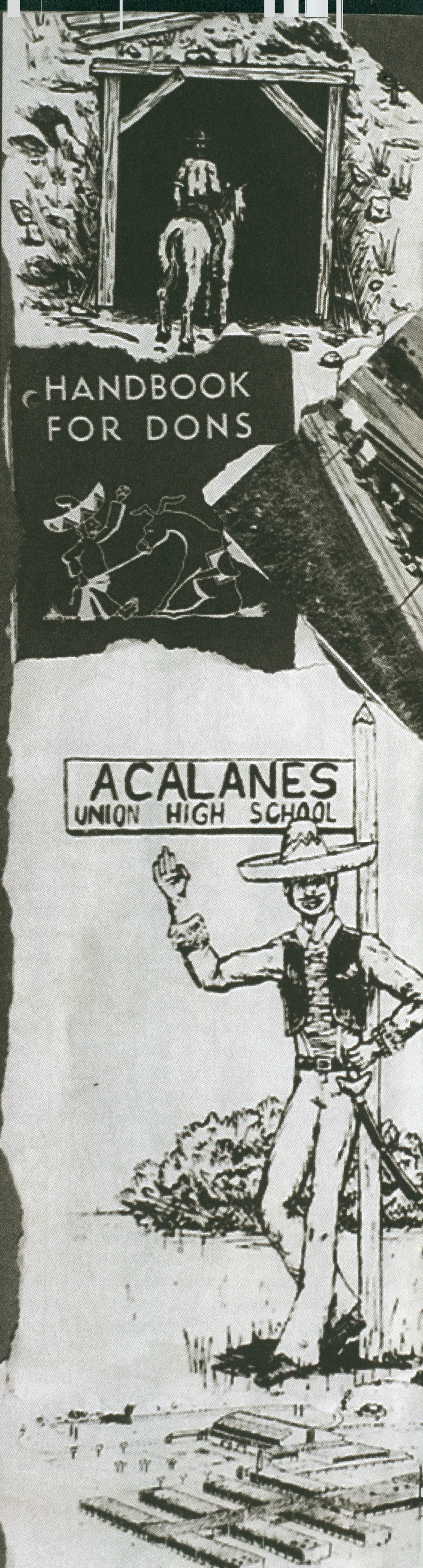
During the Cold War, the CIA overthrew Guatemala's first democratically elected government in a 1954 coup d'etat, deposing President Jacobo Arbenz due to the 'threatening' spread of communism in the country. The U.S. replaced Arbenz with Carlos Armas's authoritarian, military government. The U.S. government advised and funded these regimes and supported the repression tactics that crushed civil opposition and harmed the citizens of Guatemala.

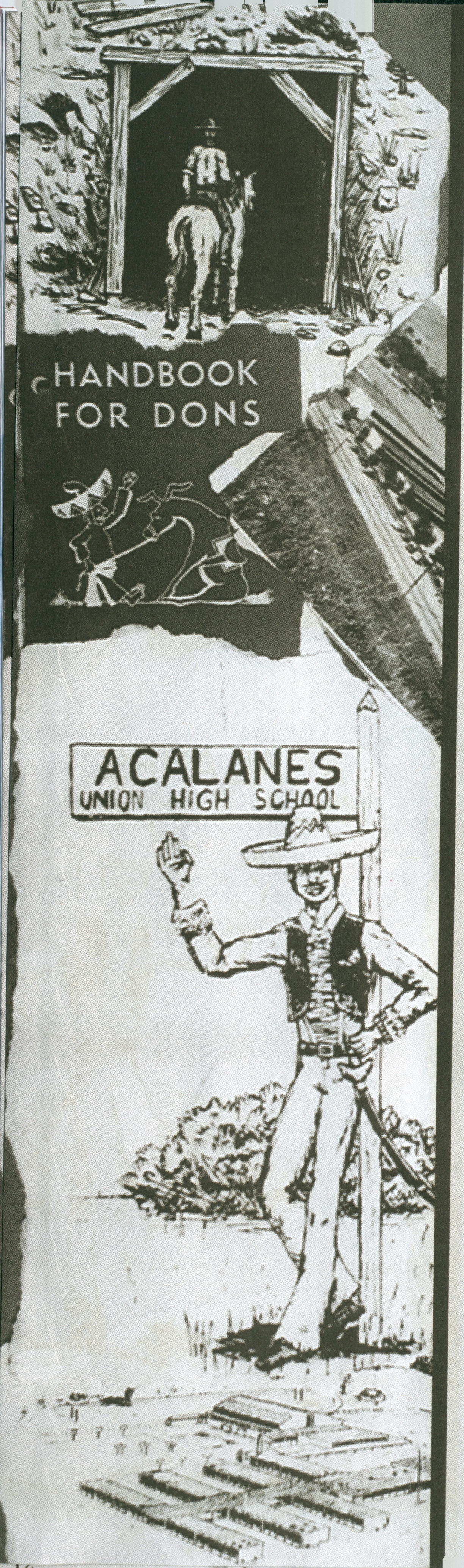
"Guatemala had a democratically elected president, who had said some things that were perceived to be socialist or communist by the United States: threatening to nationalize some foreign companies' assets inside of the country. There was then the US-directed coup in Guatemala which led to instability in the country for the rest of the 20th century," Morlan said.

Guatemala, and many other satellite states, paid the price for America's deep-rooted fear of communism, a fact often overlooked in the larger, "U.S. against Russia" retelling of the Cold War.

The American takeover of Guatemala also had crippling effects on its newly established democracy, which still had not fully recovered from the authoritarian rule that occurred during the Cold War.

"All across Central America, there's a lot of instability, not all of it is caused by the United States but if a foreign power came in and directed a coup against our president, that would probably destabilize us for at least 50 years. That's not something you can get over quickly, especially if it happens during a formative period in a country where they're trying to implement democracy," Morlan said.





Guatemala is not the only country to fall victim to U.S. intervention. From 1973-1990, the U.S. supported Augusto Pinochet, a violent dictator who overthrew the previous socialist government in Chile and dismantled Chile's democratic systems.

"Pinochet was the military general who seized power, and we had helped him seize power because he was seen as a bulwark against communism when in reality he had a very repressive, a very heavy-handed regime… the main thing that developed socially, and economically, during his dictatorship is an extreme economic inequality that currently still persists," junior Hanniel Dunn said.

Some people also note the hypocrisy of the United States's past actions, given their long-standing commitment to establishing democracy beyond U.S. borders.

"In Chile, we helped Pinochet maintain power from 1973 to 1990. That's a long time and the United States, if it really was devoted to democracy across the world, would not help keep a military dictator in power," Morlan said.

Despite its large impact on the governments and peoples of both countries, the details of American intervention in Guatemala and Chile are typically confined to "satellite wars," as defined above. The use of Guatemala and Chile as satellite states in this larger political battle disregarded their losses as simple casualties in the face of a much more "important" war.

"We focus on our rivalry with the Soviet Union more than we focus on the satellite wars that we were in or even the people that we were trying to pull in order to battle communism because we focus so heavily on that rivalry with the Soviet Union that everyone else seems like collateral damage," Morlan said.

Students also note that the relegation of Guatemala and Chile to satellite states also glosses over many of the negative effects that still persist in those countries today.

"Certainly this description of satellite countries is somewhat true but it's obviously not the full description...we need to understand that during that time America propped up many horrible and cruel regimes that didn't do a very good job at safeguarding their people, or human rights, or even their economy," Dunn said. "So a lot wof the poverty that you see currently comes out of that, of those dictatorships who helped set up in the Cold War to abstain and prevent communism."

The lasting effects of teaching misleading perspectives directly contribute to ignorance about many Latin American countries. In turn, some students may view many of the less-developed South American countries as slower and less developed than the US, but more often than not they are not taught the bigger picture.

"People can view the instability in Guatemala, Nicaragua and say, 'Oh, these countries, they just can't get it together' but not knowing that we were probably the reason why they've had instability makes them probably less empathetic to their situation," Morlan said.

Such misguided perceptions also play into preconceived stereotypes that many Americans have towards Latin American countries.

"Well the current perception, at least from what seems to be the typical American standpoint, is that they're both very poor and impoverished countries. And that's a true fact," Dunn said. "But we need to understand the reasons for them being so impoverished and such wealth inequality exists there right now. It's because of American intervention and American-backed dictatorships that we perceive them as poor, and it just doesn't tell the full story, which is far more complex than what we think."

Teachers also state that the lack of in-depth attention surrounding Latine history in their curriculum comes from the insufficient time they have to address such concentrated issues.

"When you're asking specifically about Latino history, you're looking at it through a microscope not looking at the big picture. If you think about it in the context of just transitioning to the block schedule there are constantly ways that we're losing minutes in class. It's just been, over the course of the last 10 years, repeated loss of time. Losing time in what is supposed to be just a survey course of history in general," U.S. and AP European History teacher Edward Seelenbacher said.

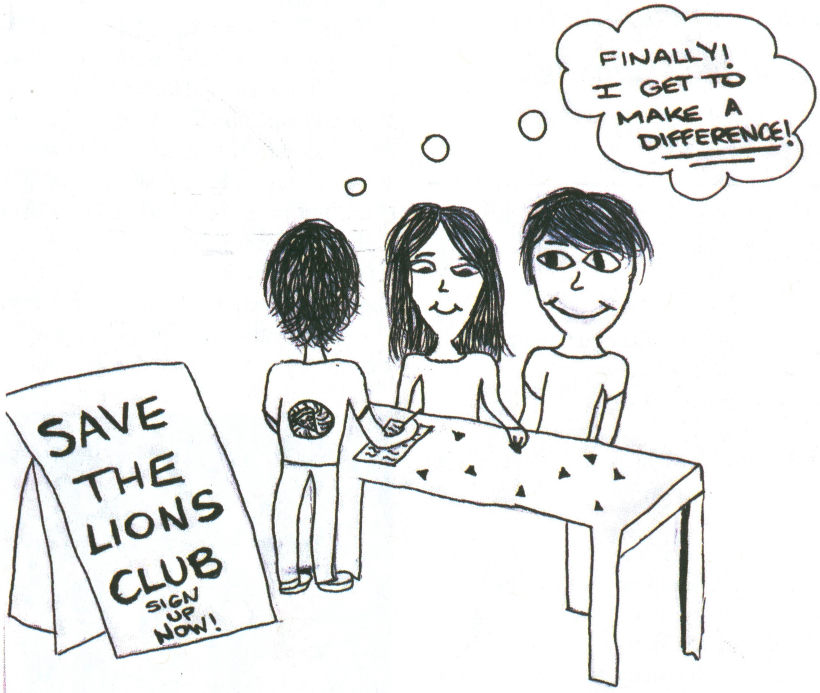
There is no easy way to understand history, nor can it be adequately summarized in a four-page article, but as Acalanes considers the events of the past, staff and students urge the rest of the community to broaden their perspective in regards to the complex history and struggle that several Latin American countries endured.

"Any one perspective focused on a country tends to glorify it, overlook its failures, and overlook the horrible things that it might have done. And for any country, whether it be a European one or perhaps an American or Asian country, that leads to a skewed worldview that isn't as whole and isn't as accurate as it should be," Dunn said.

Clubs: Changing the World One Lunch at a Time

Small communities within the student body making a difference

By Melina Nath and Jacqueline Kuhner | Staff Writers


FINALLY! I GET TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE!
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Blueprint Cartoon/Maia Upp

Twice a year, the front quad is filled with decorative posters, entrancing desserts, and bustling students in the name of one event: Club Day.

Acalanes Leadership hosted Club Day on Sept. 10, providing students with an opportunity to interact and become involved in new and returning clubs.

Club presidents have been creating and renewing their clubs since the spring of last year. This semester, there are a total of 53 clubs on campus, many of which revolve around fun activities, charity, or equity work.

Clubs surrounding charity initiatives make fundraising organizations accessible to the student body. The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) Club and GIVE Club both provide students with charity opportunities. The UNICEF club brings the worldwide organization to the Acalanes community by holding a series of fundraisers throughout the school year for students.

"There's a lot of basic fundraisers we do every year, such as [the] Chipotle fundraiser, but every year we have new ideas," UNICEF Club President and junior Kate Carter said. "I love that so many people are willing to come and share ideas. I also really like how most of the people in the club are super committed and super passionate about it, which makes it a great club to be a part of because everyone is there for the right reasons."

The GIVE Club also provides support for charities, focusing on collaborating with local non-profits and fundraisers. GIVE provides volunteering opportunities to students hoping to make a difference in the community.

"I think this community is pretty privileged, so the GIVE Club is needed to help give back," GIVE Club Secretary and junior Jasmine Latimer said.

Officers of both the UNICEF and GIVE club report that high school students show more interest in helping their community than younger kids. Members of these clubs use this passion and spirit to host interactive activities such as fundraisers and other events to help combat local issues.

"The clubs are more hands-on and interesting because we're in high school. We can do volunteering and these issues seem more important now," Latimer said.

Genuine student interest builds strong relationships within many clubs. Across the many Acalanes clubs, various social media platforms help to create a positive image for clubs. Public attention increases the number of participants and clears away bias about how people may view clubs.

"With Club Day, promotion on social media, and friends getting involved, it really takes away any stigma of 'clubs being weird' or 'I don't want to waste my lunch going to a club'. You can get a great group of people who all have the same goal, which is really nice," Carter said.

Clubs surrounding equity initiatives also help students build strong connections on campus. Participating in clubs such as Black Student Union (BSU), Queer Student Alliance (QSA), and Latinos Unidos provides a close community for students who may sometimes feel out of place.

"[Clubs] provide a safe space for students. It also provides an opportunity for anyone to learn and grow by attending meetings, and so open dialogues, conversations," Leadership and Ethnic Studies teacher Katherine Walton said.

BSU President and junior Ava Freeman joined BSU her freshman year at Acalanes and found a passion for the club. The goal of BSU is to promote equity on campus and to provide a safe space for Black students.

"BSU does a range of things. Sometimes, it's just a safe space and we do fun activities. But other times, we have formal discussions about racial issues we see on campus and we will be putting on fundraisers throughout the year," Freeman said.

The longstanding Queer Student Alliance (QSA) at Acalanes provides members of the LGBTQ+ community with a safe space to dialogue and find like-minded individuals. QSA has put together presentations on a variety of topics such as the meaning behind the LGBTQ+ acronym, LGBTQ+ issues, and other important topics. QSA presents to a number of demographics at and around Acalanes, ranging from middle schoolers to teachers.

"[We] talked to the California Teachers Association and that has hundreds of people on it and was really impactful," QSA co-President and senior Autumn Long said.

Continued on 17

Shining Light on the Food Shortage in Contra Costa County

Acalanes community aids local food banks through canned food drives

Erin Hambidge, Natalie Hiatt, and August Walker | Opinion Editor and Staff Writers

For the majority of Lafayette residents, the struggle to put food on the table is often a world away. In reality, that world is a 15-minute car ride to the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano, where one in eight local residents rely on the food bank's program for a stable source of food.

The pandemic exacerbated the severe shortage of volunteers and donations and increased people's dependency on local food banks, causing food aid programs in Contra Costa County to be in dire need of aid. Through the actions of Leadership, student volunteers, and clubs, the Acalanes community looks to combat hunger in surrounding cities in addition to spreading awareness on the issue.

According to the United States Census Bureau, families in Lafayette's median household income is about $179,000 per year, nearly 79 percent greater than Contra Costa County's average median household income of $100,000 per year. As such, food insecurity,
which the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines as the lack of consistent access to enough food for a healthy life, is considerably less prevalent in Lamorinda than in other towns in the Bay Area.

"Food is rarely something that people in our community worry about. In Lafayette, especially myself, we really take it for granted," junior Emily Berkowitz said.

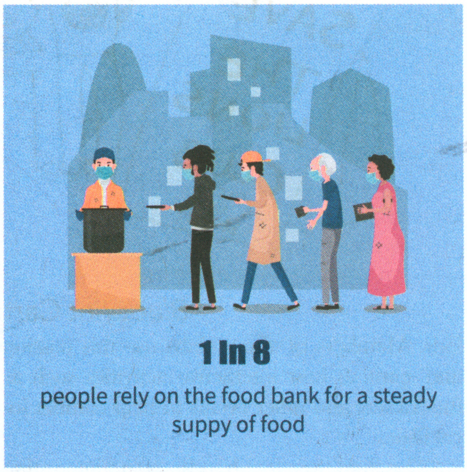
With the relaxed attitude toward food access in Lafayette, many people fail to realize the high amount of food they toss aside daily.

"There's a lot of food that goes to waste in privileged communities because people think 'oh I'm just gonna make as much as I need and if we have leftovers we have leftovers.' People aren't really trying to focus on getting the correct amount. They just want to have enough, and then if there's surplus, that's okay," Berkowitz said.

Staff members on Acalanes' campus also note the careless discardment of food that they end up cleaning up each day.

"Some kids just drop the food that they don't want. I've been finding burritos that have a bite taken out of them and then are just thrown away. Pizza and other foods, same thing. I'm not sure if it's just because it's free, but they just want to waste it, and it's not nice. And all this food [the custodians] just throw in the trash," custodian Edgar Gonzalez Garcia said.

Some students voice that the lack of awareness about the current food situation in Contra Costa County may stem from inexperience with food insecurity rather than deliberate ignorance.


1 In 8
people rely on the food bank for a steady suppy of food

Blueprint Graphic/Freschtta Warres

"It's all they've grown up with… [They] have just been pretty privileged with the food they get and the area they live in. So it's not that they're really doing something wrong, it's just all they know," junior Ellis Burger said.

Despite some Lafayette families' easy access to meals, Acalanes is not immune to the food shortages that plague many surrounding cities.

"There is more food insecurity in our area than people realize. While our district has a smaller amount of Free & Reduced Meal students compared to a district such as Oakland, there is a definite need in our community. During 2020 when we ran the Community Meals Program open to any child under 18 we served over 1000 meals a day," Head of Foods for Acalanes High School District Rebecca Ward said.

The number of meals served a day changed considerably over the past two years. Throughout the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, unemployment rates skyrocketed, leaving many people unable to purchase the food they need to survive without assistance. Today, food banks throughout the Bay Area are responsible for feeding more families than any time before the pandemic.

"[The pandemic] almost doubled everything we did. We went from having to serve 25 to 50 million pounds [of food], and from serving 180,000 to 280,000 [people]," Contra Costa and Solano Food Bank worker Nelson Oliver said.

Despite there being a growing demand for volunteer help in local food banks, COVID-19 restrictions limit the number of available volunteers. Still, food banks are not the only organizations suffering from a loss of participants. Kids Against Hunger, a nonprofit food packaging and distribution service, also lost essential help from volunteers.

"Right now we are limited by COVID-19 to 30 people max… The first couple of months were pretty tough because when we reopened, every single person had to have 10 feet of tablespace by themselves. We were pretty limited on how many people we could fit in the warehouse," Kids Against Hunger director Sheri Leal said.

The pandemic increased general paranoia concerning the spread of disease, so during quarantine, little people left the safety of their homes. Consequently, the numbers of donations and volunteers decreased significantly.

"With COVID restrictions, food donations dropped extremely. A lot of people don't want to have food drives because it brings a lot of people together, so those are a lot harder to come by," Oliver said.

The donation drives that Acalanes organizes annually followed the same trend.

"In 2019, [Acalanes] got 23,000 cans… We tried to have a canned food drive last year, but we only got 3,000 cans," Leadership student and junior Lily Hanzel said.

Despite last year's difficulties with raising donations, Acalanes's decision to hold a canned food drive during Homecoming week presents a positive outlook for future contributions.

"So 2019 would have been the first year we did it, and it was strategic. Our canned food drives were in November. It's a busy time. It's vacation and I just thought we live in a really generous community, and we could do better," Leadership teacher Katherine Walton said.

This change proved to be successful as Acalanes received the equivalent of over 15,000 cans, including cash donations, during the 2021 drive.

The desire to make a positive impact on the community plays an important role in the successful outcomes of Acalanes's food drives.

"Food is a basic need, and I do think that there is, I don't want to call it an obligation, but I almost think like this is one way that we show up for our community which is partly why we did it through homecoming, because I think homecoming is more than a class competition. It really is showing up for your school and also our surrounding community and food bank," Walton said.

On top of efforts from high school food drives, food bank workers encourage individual students to assist in any way they can, even if that help is as small as a one dollar donation.

"You can do personal food drives or schedule public food drives. You can also volunteer to distribute and go online to donate money. Money goes a long way. Every dollar spent is almost a whole meal," Oliver said.

Monetary donations hold almost as much value to food banks as volunteer hours because a significant portion of the food bank's supply requires donations from companies and individuals to purchase cans.

"About 60 percent of [the food] is donated from the community. The other 30 or 40 percent we actually purchase...The food that we purchase stretches a lot farther than people think," Oliver said.

Other local food banks such as the Alameda Food Bank also cite the benefits of cash donations, which allow them to convert the money to food at a highly efficient rate.

"It's more useful to donate money than canned food, since we can turn one dollar into seven dollars worth of food ourselves," Alameda Food Bank executive director Cindy Houts said.

Food banks also host volunteer opportunities digitally, which can allow people below the volunteer age requirement to get involved.

"Depending on what your closest location's age requirement is, you can volunteer. If you have a social media account you can hold a digital fundraiser, which helps out a lot," Houts said.

In addition to volunteering, many people believe that raising awareness about hunger in Contra Costa County is equally important in creating positive change.

"Gaining understanding of their wider community, the struggles of families who may be at a challenging economic level is vital," Ward said.

Many students believe that such awareness is vital in a town like Lafayette because the majority of the population is detached from the daily struggles that a large portion of Contra Costa county faces.

"Try to be more aware of [food shortages] and have other people understand their food consumption because being in a bubble means not many people realize what they have versus what others have. Just look at what you have and don't take it for granted," Burger said.

Gaining a broader perspective grants students the ability to view the difficult situations of others with more empathy and understanding, allowing the equity work at Acalanes to promote a more inclusive campus environment.

"In light of the equity work the district is doing this year, it is more important than ever for students to have compassion and support for each other. In some districts, the food students eat at school is the food that they eat for the week," Ward said.

Ultimately, community members reiterate that people who have the privilege of not needing to worry about where their next meal is coming from should lend a hand to those who lack that privilege.

"I feel really fortunate that I can go to the grocery store, and pretty much buy whatever I need to feed my family and without thinking twice about it. Or I can go out to eat, and I see some of the same in our community in terms of just choices we make. And I think it's a really good reminder for all of us that we all have different circumstances and different needs and when and if we can give to others this is one way to do it," Walton said.

Clubs

Continued from 15

Similarly, the Latinos Unidos Club provides a safe space for Latine students while presenting relevant issues to the community. This year, Acalanes celebrates Latine Heritage Month for the first time by hosting movie nights, potlucks, and guest speakers.

"It feels really nice that Acalanes is celebrating Latine Heritage month. I think it makes students at our school feel seen and heard, and it gives us an opportunity to share our culture and get involved with events on campus," Latinos Unidos President and sophomore Zoya Acuña said.

Leadership asked Latinos Unidos to present during Equity Council meeting on Sept. 24. Members of the club used this time to discuss the impact of the school mascot of the don on Latine students, the lack of Latine representation in media, and the issue of colorism.

"I think that a lot of minority groups can feel very out of place in a majority-white school, so I think it's important for students of color to have a safe space that they can talk about their problems or just hang out and get a break from the rest of the school," Acuña said.

The messages that Latinos Unidos brought up resonated with several participants of Equity Council.

"I knew that our mascot had a negative historical past, but I wasn't sure exactly what it was or why. I am glad to have learned more about the history of where the term 'don' came from," junior Tess Gundacker said.

Junior Rachel Gottfried first joined the Jewish Student Union Club (JSU) as a freshman and took on the presidential position her sophomore year after recognizing her passion for creating an inclusive environment for Jewish students at Acalanes. Gottfried hopes to grow JSU so that more people can learn about Jewish culture.

"It made me feel comfortable as a Jewish person in my community and I wanted to make it a comfortable spot for other Jews at our school," Jewish Student Union President and junior Rachel Gottfried said.

A new addition to the long list of equity clubs at Acalanes is the Feminism Club. One of the club's main goals is to discuss the many adversities that women face on a daily basis.

"I think my biggest goal is to create a space for discussion. Never in my life have I had someone initiate a rich discussion about feminism with me. Everything that I know is stuff that I taught and found out myself, and to me, that is just so wrong," Feminism Club President and junior Sophia Acuff said.

Clubs centered around equity and diversity are not the only clubs on campus. Many students choose to spend their lunches participating in more light-hearted clubs such as Acalanes' Got Talent, Minecraft Club, Pre-Med and Starbucks Club, Sailing Club and Ski Club.

Freshman Lauren Blosser created the Ski Club this year. Blosser has had a passion for skiing since a young age and always wanted to participate in clubs at Acalanes, so she decided to create a space where students, whether they have experience with skiing or not, could take ski trips together.

"I thought it would be a fun way to kind of bring everyone together and also to meet people who like skiing just as much as I do, and a way for people to find a new interest," Blosser said.

In a sea of unfamiliar faces, clubs allow students to find people they truly connect with through a common interest or passion. This helps students feel welcome within smaller communities at Acalanes.

"Whether you're there for your friends and then you're getting involved in it because they're in it or you're really putting yourself out there and there's a club that really intrigues you and you're going alone, I think [clubs] are super beneficial to go because you create so many friendships and spend your lunch with people that are there for the same cause or common interest. You can create friendships and bond with people that you may not know otherwise," Carter said.

The Missing Year in Student Development

Behavioral issues in the return to school

Connor Faust | Feature Editor

“We were never like that, were we?” Any student knows the feeling of looking to the year before them and cringing at their own experiences. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, students and teachers alike find a plague of behavioral issues occurring across the student body, leaving many to question if the two year in-person hiatus had effects beyond the gradebook.

In the effort to assimilate into the daily student life, teachers and students alike continue to experience difficulty relearning how to study together, as many blame time lost during an important juvenile developmental period of life.

Student misbehavior represents a major challenge going into the 2021 school year, causing disruptions to students and teachers alike through a variety of actions ranging from annoying to outright destructive.

However, to an extent school officials consider the misbehavior par for the course considering the situation.

“We’re in a different time right now. You know, got to remember that, a lot of these kids haven’t been in school for almost two years, you know, when we came back this year, because of COVID obviously, and there’s a there’s a lot of kids that I guess you could say me me feel the need to express themselves. And I think it’s just teenagers being teenagers… I do understand that you know, kids have been cooped up for 18 months and they want to get out and explore and but again, you know, I’m not in agreement with any kind of destruction or bad behavior,” Campus Supervisor Andy McDonald said.

From a psychological point of view, the first consideration is the developmental stage Acalanes students are in.

“What the first I would say generally speaking is school kids, they make mistakes, their brain is not fully mature, specifically high school boys. Your frontal lobe isn’t totally mature until you’re 25… you get this position where somebody, they’re like really excited and I’m sure their peers have such a huge influence on them. So they’re gonna make dumb decisions. Their friends are saying like, hey, let’s ‘let’s do something dumb’, and then they’ll they’re going to do it,” Psycology teacher Nader Jazayeri said.

Blueprint Photo/Stella Heo

Additionally, the nearly two years of lost time as a result of the quarantine built a barrier in development for many students, across the grade levels, making socializing, and by proxy, teaching difficult.

“I do [think it’s a valuable point in development]. I think it’s probably worse just because of puberty...what I have noticed with my seniors is, some kids will make eye contact with me, and some kids will not make eye contact like they’re still scared to make eye contact with their teachers. You know, some kids think it’s okay to have my phone out on my desk, my computer open my earbuds in and I’m just doing this, you know. So we’re all kind of relearning how to be sociable...They learned their social skills on Instagram, and they think it’s okay to behave like this in the classroom. So they actually don’t know how to behave in high school,” Jazayeri said.

Many upperclassmen have interpreted this as immaturity, and blamed this slowed development for the issues occurring with underclassmen.

“Since these freshmen in particular haven’t really been in school, since I think like seventh or eighth grade, they didn’t have the maturity impact of starting high school that we did with Don’s day and all of this, like super legitimate stuff happening at the start of the year. So they kind of just went in with the middle school attitude,” senior Lucas Hasse said.

For Hasse, this development occurred with his involvement in school activities and connections to older role models.

“Well, I saw upperclassmen, and especially since my sister had been a senior when I started, I really admired upperclassmen. And I tried to take after their example, considering so many extracurriculars, like sports, and the instrumental music program. But I think that since these freshmen in particular are so disconnected from the rest of the school, just because they didn’t have the same like blending that a lot of other classes do, they are kind of their own student body, separated from a lot of the other grades at Acalanes right now,” Hasse said.

Despite popular attribution, the problem hasn’t been solely the underclassmen. While some have been more prevalent in creating issues, no one grade is innocent or guilty.

“I think freshmen are kind of an easy target just because they are freshmen, you know? Yeah. Did they miss out on a lot of school time? Yes. But you know, sophomores, juniors, and seniors missed out on a lot of school time too. You know, reports that we get, when something’s going on, it’s not always the freshmen… I think it’s, it’s been every class this year. And that’s, and that’s not to say that one class has been worse than the other. You know, I’m sure there is [one class that’s been worse], but you know, I haven’t seen that. But I think it’s all grades. I do, really,” McDonald said.

However, some see upperclassmen as not having fulfilled their duties as role models.

“I think the [upperclassmen] are role models. I think that the freshmen see that the [upperclassmen] leave their trash after lunch. 'Oh, I guess that's what we do here. We leave trash after lunch,'...I always tell my seniors, at all the schools I've been at, for the welcome back rally. Some say 'let's hear for the freshmen' and all three other classes, and they start booing the freshmen. I've also seen it where they say 'let's hear it for the freshmen', all three classes standing ovation, welcome, you're going to love it here. The seniors do really set the standard, the culture for what a school is supposed to look like. They're not asked to be put in that position. But you know, [seniors] are in that position, whether you like it or not," Jazayeri said.

Some students have felt this pressure from their teachers. Yet, for seniors, the difficulty has been in trying to successfully set an example and for freshmen to interpret it as such.

"My statistics teacher, my econ teacher, and my band teacher.... a lot of my teachers actually recognize how rambunctious this grade is, and they're constantly pressuring the senior class, or I wouldn't say pressuring, but encouraging the senior class to like, take action and try and set a good example. But it's really hard to set an example for people who aren't willing to learn from you," Haase said.

To school administrators however, the issue comes in how this role model position is conveyed. The difficulty comes in being role models through example rather than chastisement.

"I think it's nuanced in terms of how that can be effective," Vice Principal Mike Plant said. "I'm saying I think it might be effective to be like, 'Here's how much we care about Acalanes. And here's what we have together in this community, our school, and here's how we want to treat our school, here's how we want to treat each other,'. So to me, that's where the dialogue needs to go. Not necessarily, finger wagging 'You guys are annoying,'... I think the message is more like this is our community. This is our school, and these are the things that we see that we don't like, what can we do to diminish those [actions] and also show more pride in our school,".

Despite efforts from the school, some cases remain more severe than students running around and making noise. The current response remains to punish accordingly.

"Well you know, I think you have to show a little bit of leniency but at the same time you know again if kids are out there and they're destroying property you know, I honestly 100% agree that you know, something should be done," McDonald said.

Acalanes looks to proactively address issues before disciplining students becomes necessary. The Acalanes administration plans to address the issue through in class discussions and influential students within sports and leadership programs.

"So we talked to all teachers about talking to their classes in general about it. And I think that happened with some level of fidelity today...there's a student panel that's meeting to discuss kind of the problem and to canvas student ideas....And then I know we're looking at perhaps putting some programming into some freshmen classes, maybe english 9 maybe PE, maybe maybe living Earth, you know, maybe world history, putting some programming into those classes...So that's kind of what we're working on now is how can we get teachers giving more guidance to these kids, and also some students, some older students, perhaps also kind of providing that same message. We've also been working with sports teams. Specifically, we've been working with some of the sports captains on that kind of stuff," Plant said.

In light of the numerous destructive trends, many parts of the staff look to respond with empathy. In addition, the forecast calls for low temperatures and lower numbers of incidents with students as California moves into the Fall and Winter months.

"I try to be understanding because you know, whether you guys think or not we were kids once too, you know. I really believe it'll slow down as the weather starts to cool off. In my experience of doing this I've been here 19 years now and just from my experience, it always seems like kids calm down once the weather gets colder and starts raining and stuff like that. Kids seem to get a little bit more calm," McDonald said.

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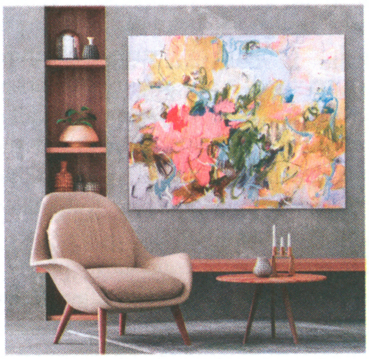
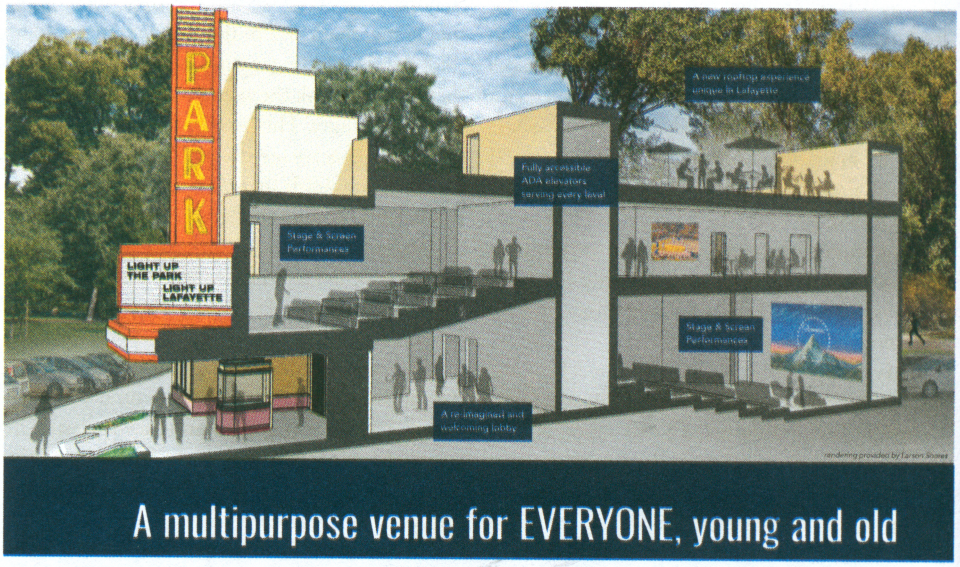


Lafayette Works to Revitalize Downtown Park Theater

After its closure in 2005, members of the community work to reopen a central part of Lafayette

Stella Heo and Brendan Connelly | Online Editor in Chief and Online News Editor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Courtesy Graphic/Tracey Fare

As the neon signs flickered off, chairs creaked closed, and popcorn machines powered down, the doors of the Lafayette Park Theater shut with no clear date of when they would open once again.

The 80-year-old theater closed in 2005, however The Park Theater Trust (TPTT), an all-volunteer nonprofit, is attempting to revive the movie theater and create a center-of-attraction for the city while commemorating the theater's long history.

As Lafayette recovered from the Great Depression and citizens watched World War II unfold on the global stage, the theater opened its doors on Aug. 21, 1941, with Bud Abbott and Lou Costello's Hold That Ghost playing for the opening night film.

Planned by William B. David, the theater had a classic design with ivory, maroon, and varying shades of blue as the main colors.

The theater became popular for showing foreign films, which residents from around Contra Costa County came to watch.

"I made a lot of money there. It was a very successful theater. It was one of the top specialty theaters in the Bay Area as far as when we would open up a really good, hot new title foreign film. It was a very good theater," Park Theater operator from 1986 to 2004 Allen Michaan said. "It was very much in demand by distribution, and we did very, very well as far as our numbers at the box office… [Viewers] came from all over Contra Costa County. I don't think they came through the tunnel, from Oakland or Berkeley, but they did come from all over Contra Costa County."

Despite the initial popularity of the theater, Michaan sold the Lafayette Park Theater back to the real estate investor who originally purchased the property on Sept. 18, 2005, because the local theater could not compete with larger theaters.

"We closed the theater because Century Theaters built a 16-screen complex in Walnut Creek and another one in Pleasant Hill, and we no longer had access to movies, so the marketplace of specialty in foreign films, which the park had thrived on for all those years I operated, was completely [shut off from us]. We could not get those films anymore," Michaan said.

Prior to the establishment of TPTT, there were four attempts from various members of the community to repurchase the theater. Despite the multiple efforts to buy back the theater since 2005, a group of five investors currently have ownership, as the groups interested in reopening the theater struggled to find enough support among community members and theater business managers.

"There didn't seem to be an appetite for raising the money post raising the money for the library, and so the effort continued and conversations continued, but it didn't really seem to have the legs that it does now," Lafayette Vice Mayor Theresa Gerringer said.

TPTT, then known as the Park Theater Action Committee, began in fall of 2018 when the city put together a group that would focus on reopening the theater.

"From the city's standpoint and from the standpoint of the community, it consistently emerged as one of the top priorities to reopen as something of a cinema, some kind of a cultural hub… [The city] called for volunteers to look at possible uses for the property that would be consistent with what the city hopes to establish what they call the downtown Historic District, which is sort of their core downtown," Chair of TPTT Marketing and Community Outreach Tracey Farrell said.

In order to find the most effective plan for the Park Theater, TPTT researched possible methods that would allow the theater to remain open for a long period of time, which included finding a for-profit operator that would respond to the Lamorinda community.

"We are not theater operators. We wanted to create a model that would allow us to protect the building, own the building, protect it, care for it, but then lease it to a for-profit operator. We were in contract pre-COVID-19 with an [angel] buyer. The plan was that he would own the building, [and] we would do a lease-to-buy that from him," Farrell said.

The group currently has $2 million of the $3 million needed to close the deal on the property to begin work with the for-profit operator, and TPTT must raise the last $1 million by the end of this year.

"[The] most urgent need right now is to close by the end of this year because once we close on the building, and we take, we meaning the nonprofit trust and volunteers, once we take ownership of their building, it really broadens our fundraising abilities in terms of being able to write grants and provide people with some comfort that we really are the caretakers of this building," TPTT Fundraising Chair Kathy Bowles said.

TPTT also looked at other local theaters as models to understand what made them successful.

"We looked at lots of theaters around the Bay Area but also around the country to see what was working for their small town cinemas, and what seemed to be working was [having] more than one screen," Farrell said.

With this in mind, TPTT plans on having two screens, one on the first floor and another on the second floor, as well as a kitchen, community space, and bar. However, some students worry that the theater is too small to host many people.

"I think it would be cool to [reopen the theater and go]. It would be really hard to fit all the people in there. I'd go if there's space. I think it's a cool space, so a lot of people would want to go there, but because it's a small theater, it would probably be hard to fit everything in there," sophomore Emma Gerlings said.

The possible reopening still excites many students because the theater will expand what Lafayette has to offer.

"One of the complaints I've always had with Lafayette is that we have a fantastic food culture here with many different, wonderful restaurants, but I've traditionally found in the past [that] there aren't very many things to do outside of that," senior Owen Thomas said. "By making the things that you can offer more diverse, I think that it will be a very beneficial experience for the town... I think that if I was to go out with friends or to hang out with people, I think [the theater] would definitely be an option."

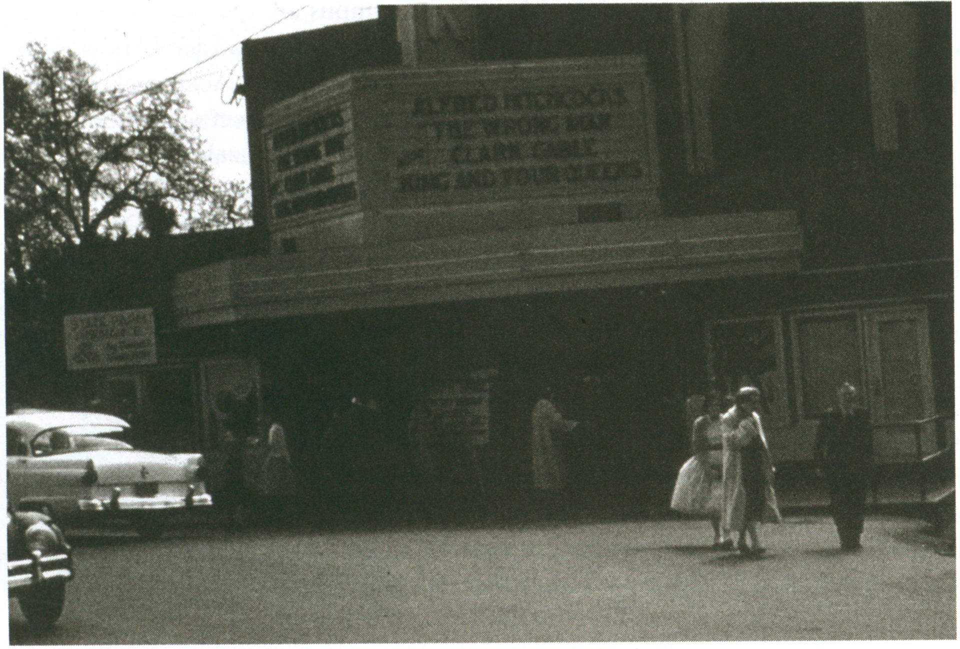
Reopening the theater will also convert an unused building into a city hub where members of the Lafayette community and beyond will be able to gather.

"I also think that it's great to restore an old building, and it was just doing nothing there, so I'm very supportive of adding to where there was nothing before," Thomas said. "[The theater] would definitely have an impact on the nightlife or the day life of just Lafayette in general among its own habitants because I think it would provide a service that local residents have desperately been seeking."

Since the theater closed in 2005, students have not had the chance to be inside of the building while the theater was in operation, creating a sense of mystery around the building.

"I've always wondered, ever since I saw that place, what it looked like inside... [The theater has] a time machine kind of vibe. It feels like we're going back into the past to go into something that hasn't been open to many kids in our age group, so I feel like it would be kind of like going back into time, like the early 2000s, to go sit in a movie theater that hasn't been used since 2005," senior Diane Saali said.

The prospect of the reopening of the Park Theater offers Lafayette a new and revived cultural center. In addition to restoring a historical part of the community, it can bring together the Lafayette community through a unique part of Lafayette's history.



Courtesy Photo/Lafayette Park Theater

Blueprint Photo/Mara Korzeniowska

"I think the time is right, in terms of where we are coming out of COVID-19, and the people in the community [are] looking to that sort of revitalization and having a place for that community center again... And it will be a downtown hub, Community Center, and hopefully, the gallery will be there. I'm just very much looking forward to it... The grand opening and having it as that heart or core business or hub for Lafayette will be a very positive thing," Gerringer said.

Although an inability to compete with larger theaters and a disconnect from Hollywood led to the theater's closure, the TPTT believes that the theater's independence may allow it to recover quicker from COVID-19.

"With the right operator in place offering intriguing dynamic programming, [local theaters are] extremely successful, and, in fact, the anticipation is that they will be the ones to come out of COVID-19 even stronger because they have the opportunity to pivot more quickly," Farrell said. "They're not part of the major Hollywood distribution chain. They're usually independent. They've got good relationships with the distributors, but they're independent so they can be what [they] offer."

TPTT emphasizes that the reopening of the theater is meant for building community, not profit. They have one goal and one purpose for their funding.

"This is an all-volunteer group of people. This is not another group of investors coming in. We're professionals in our own spheres. But you know, within the context of this, it's really all about community. There's nothing in it for us but love, and I think that's important to recognize," Farrell said.

Feature: A Dialogue on the Dons

The community reflects upon the mascot's multi-layered and controversial past

Marisa Guerra Echeverría | News Editor

After 80 years of being 'Home of the Dons', Acalanes community members discuss the various meanings of the Spanish word and address a growing movement for equity and reform.

To the Latine community, the word 'Don' itself has a multitude of different meanings and connotations. One includes a complex historical context tracing back to Spanish colonization in the Americas.

According to the Online Etymology Dictionary, the word don, coming from the Latin word dominus for owner/lord/master, refers to Spanish men that seized Native American land and stole their labor. The Dons maintained a continuous presence in California throughout the era of the Spanish encomienda and mission systems as well as the Mexican land grants.

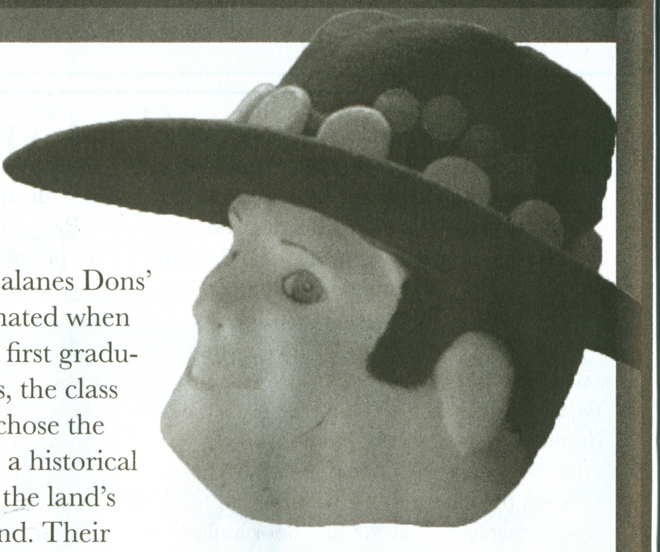
"The [Acalanes Don] would be like, 'sir', like he's a landowner," Spanish teacher Monika Voellm said. "You're using a title to refer to him like they did in feudal times… There were native peoples here and then the Spanish came through and developed the missions… The Spanish gave land grants to people and whoever received that land was usually called [a] Don, because … the people who worked on the land called [the owner a Don]."

Over time, the 'Don' has evolved into a more conversational term to respectfully address older men or men of authority in Latin America.

"[When a] teenager [talks to a] guy… more than thirty or fifty [years old, they] have to call them a Don [to] show respect to that person," custodian Edgar Gonzalez said.

In contrast, Acalanes takes a singular approach with its current interpretation of the Don, focusing on current aspects of its school culture such as citizenship and support for the community.

"We've really used [the Don] as it's morphed into the characteristics of what we think represent our community and represent Acalanes students; things like integrity, trustworthiness, responsibility, compassion, and [to be] caring and humble. You can kind of morph it into any positive attributes that you want to apply to when we say, 'What does it mean to be a Don?'" former Acalanes principal Travis Bell said.



The 'Acalanes Dons' first originated when Acalanes' first graduating class, the class of 1941, chose the mascot as a historical tribute to the land's background. Their chosen definition of the Don revolved around the Spanish landowners that first colonized the Acalanes area.

"The name 'Acalanes' came from the tribe of Native Americans who lived here thousands of years ago. They were a Miwok tribe called the 'Saclan' and, over time, somehow when the Mexicans and Spanish [Dons] were here, 'Saclan' became 'Saclanes', and then Acalanes came from that," Acalanes alumna and President of the Lafayette Historical Society Mary McCosker said.

In the 80 years since then, the Don fell into common use in the Acalanes vocabulary, baffling Spanish speakers due to the traditional nature of the word and its exclusionary tone towards non-male students.

"To have our mascot be the 'sirs' [was] truly the intention of it… all the female athletes here are the Lady Dons, which is the "lady sirs". It just doesn't even make sense to me on that level," Voellm said.

Other members of the Latine community did not find the 'respectful sir' aspect to translate well in terms of respect that students have for the campus.

"[Dons are] like an important person...Like I know every school has to be respected but... [Since] Acalanes uses the Dons names, [its students] need to respect our school, like [be] very respectful to the school," Gonzalez said.

An additional off-putting aspect of the 'Don' to the Latine community was the school's past use of 'Dons' imagery, which used to decorate Acalanes merchandise, spirit events, and, most notably, the front of the main gym.

"Like how do you represent a Don in a culturally sensitive way? Is there a way to represent that in a culturally sensitive way? Like when I first got here, there were a lot of things like ponchos and Chevy's [sombrero] hats, sometimes the mustache. It was an issue. We brought it up and it took some time and it shifted. But now...the Don got a little bit more like, okay, 'what might the person actually have worn when they had that land?', but it's still fraught with issues. Because one was a stereotype and not even historically accurate, but also kind of stereotypical and maybe problematic," Voellm said.

To remedy the harm caused by its stereotypical depictions of the Don, Acalanes administration decided to rebrand in the year 2013. In this rebranding process, the current Acalanes A replaced the Dons caricature in all Acalanes merchandise and buildings.

"We did feel, I think it was my first year as principal, like we wanted to do away with some of the racialized depictions of our mascot," former Acalanes principal Travis Bell said. "We used to have this image of the Don of a quote-unquote Don on our gym...It was like a caricature of a Don. So it didn't feel right or good to have that there. So, we invested some significant money in redoing that, we really moved away from any form of appropriation, like sombreros or mustaches on the A or whatever, and really moved into the A as our primary image, even though our mascot was still the Don."

The Acalanes administration was hesitant to change the mascot then, as there did not seem to be a pressing student conversation surrounding the Don.

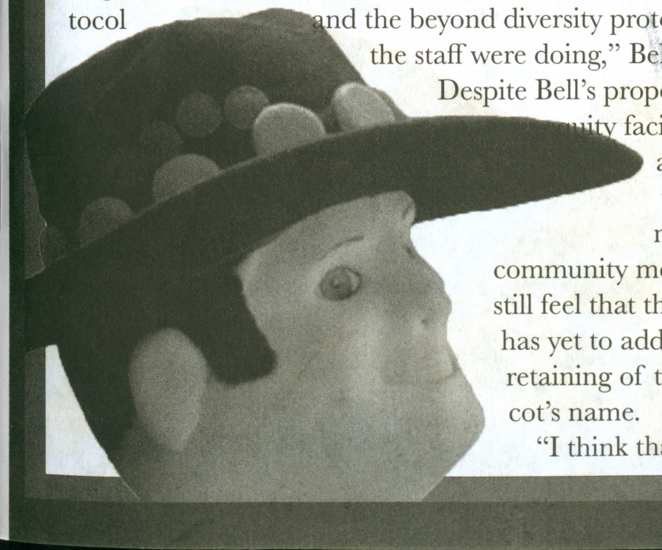
"So we really didn't have that. And when we asked students about it, it kind of was a point of low interest. So when we were talking to students and we had conversations with them, people would be like, 'Oh yeah, I could see that.' But there wasn't this huge sort of felt desired step into that," Bell said.

Additionally, administrators wanted to ensure that all aspects of the Acalanes community would accept a change.

"Changing the mascot is more than just images. When I talk about stakeholders and talking about faculty, current students, current parents, current community members, but then a whole other group of alumni. There's so much [changing] than just the image," Bell said.

Instead of changing the mascot completely in 2013, Bell opted for extensive equity training to equip the community with a way to appropriately handle the situation.

"The other sort of response was that we really felt that we had some much more pressing needs to consider when it came to equity and inclusion. First and foremost was getting our staff trained in the courageous conversation protocol and the beyond diversity protocol that the staff were doing," Bell said.



Despite Bell's proposal for community facilitation at the time, many community members still feel that the school has yet to address the retaining of the mascot's name.

"I think that there is an awareness that using the Don, as the actual visual human personification of the Don, was problematic because of so many stereotypes and racist tropes that came along with it...I don't think the issue that was being addressed was the idea of a Don itself, but rather the stereotypical personification that sometimes happened," Paniagua said.

Even though Acalanes retained its mascot, some Acalanes administrators currently phase out the word 'Dons' from the school's main catchphrases, instead replacing them with other Acalanes identifiers.

"Personally, I have phased 'Dons' out of my lexicon for the most part. I prefer "Go ACA" or "go blue" but our official mascot is still the Don so you will still hear the phrase around campus and in our community," Associate Principal Mike Plant said.

Despite all of this, members of the community express discontent with the lack of a unifying and unproblematic mascot to identify with.

"If we're not using 'Go Dons,' we don't really have a mascot. And so we're in kind of this place where we're like, Go Acalanes and that's wonderful because I love the Acalanes community always and everything, but I'm not a super fan of the Don mascot," Voellm said.

Acalanes students share a similar dissatisfaction with the amount of education surrounding the Don, with many not understanding what a Don even is.

"I have no clue why it became named the Dons. I would just assume that there is some Spanish influence on our school somewhere, and that is where the name came from," senior Connor Wollman said.

Latine students call for further education and transparency on this topic, as the Dons offer a colonized depiction of Latine history that most Acalanes students do not know the full story of.

No one seems to know [that] it's weird to see this [Don] that's...received as a conquistador. So that's a thing that we have accepted from our history and yet we don't acknowledge it in any way, shape or form. It's the only thing that we like to take credit for, for like the Spanish people that used to live here is a weird, sort of fake representation," junior Olivia Banks said.

Supporters of the Latine community will continue to advocate for greater dialogue on the Don's stereotypical and colonial history at Acalanes and call for a mascot more indicative of the school's values.

"But, I think that if one of the markers of our identity is something that excludes members of our community, and is something that in its nature excludes the identity of most people in our community, then I think it's problematic. Beyond race, the fact that we are the Dons, and that is who we are, but there are also the Lady Dons and the doñas already excluding women, is not who we are," Paniagua said.

Opinion: What is a Don Anyway?

To promote widespread equity, the school must confront and educate about its mascot's controversial history

Marisa Guerra Echeverría | News Editor

To learn about the history of the Don and Acalanes' use of it, please see the Feature article entitled "Dialogue on the Dons"

Upon hearing 'Acalanes: Home of the Dons' for the first time, I felt incredibly confused. I recently moved from a Latine community in southern Texas to the predominantly white Lamorinda area. Culture shock and a sense of isolation hit me hard in my first few months here. When I first heard of Acalanes High School and saw 'Dons' emblazoned on the gym wall, I was utterly stumped as to what a 'Don' might even mean.

It took a quick google search to find images of fierce and stereotypically 'Latin-looking' men, complete with a sombrero, mustache, and cape. At first, I was puzzled—why would a high school so removed from Latine culture and heritage proudly boast such an image? As I am writing these articles as an Acalanes 'Don' myself, a rollercoaster of emotions and a great deal of unlearning and relearning now accompanies my perspective on the Acalanes Don.

With Acalanes' first celebration of Latine History Month underway, the school must confront and educate students about the problematic history and the harmful context of the 'Don'.

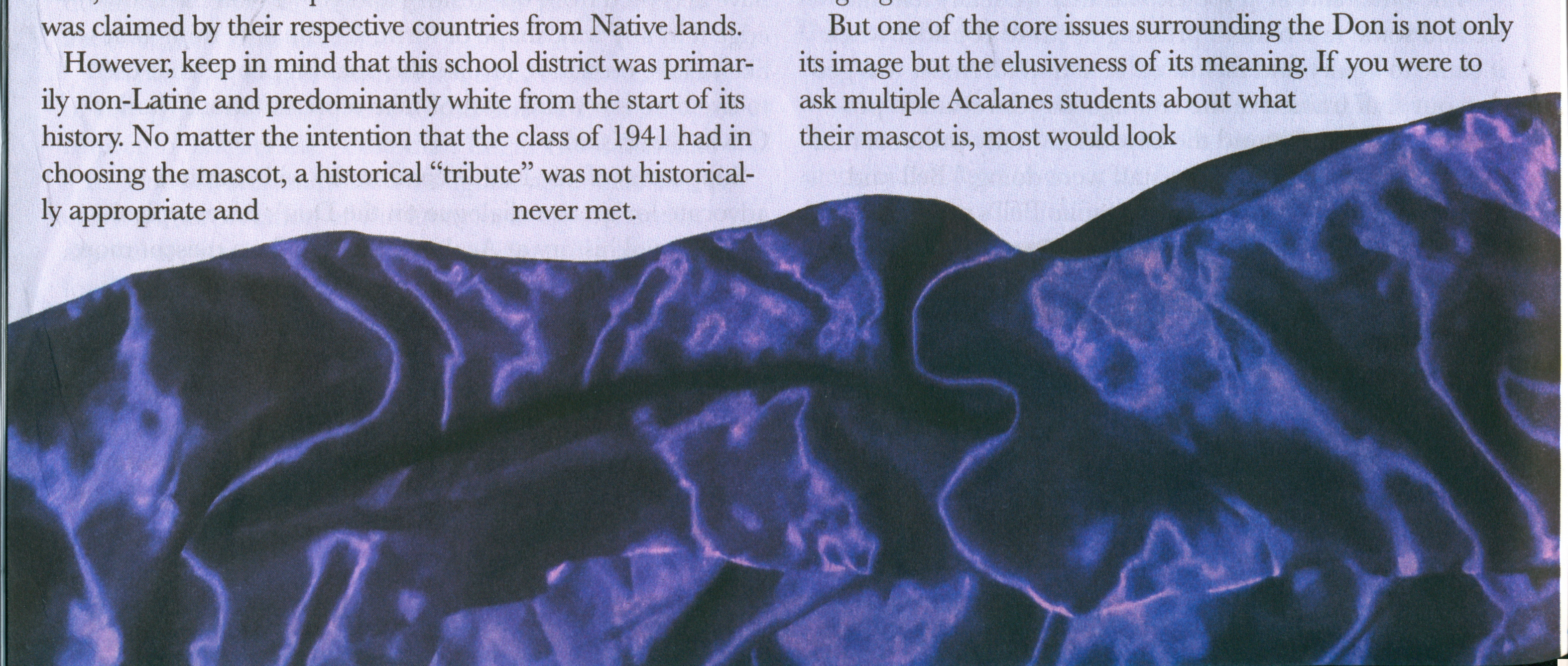
As stated in the feature article, Acalanes first took on the 'Dons' mascot following the decision of the graduating class of 1941. Their purpose in choosing the mascot, one might assume, was to pay tribute to the history of the Acalanes area, which included Spanish and Mexican 'Dons' when it was claimed by their respective countries from Native lands.

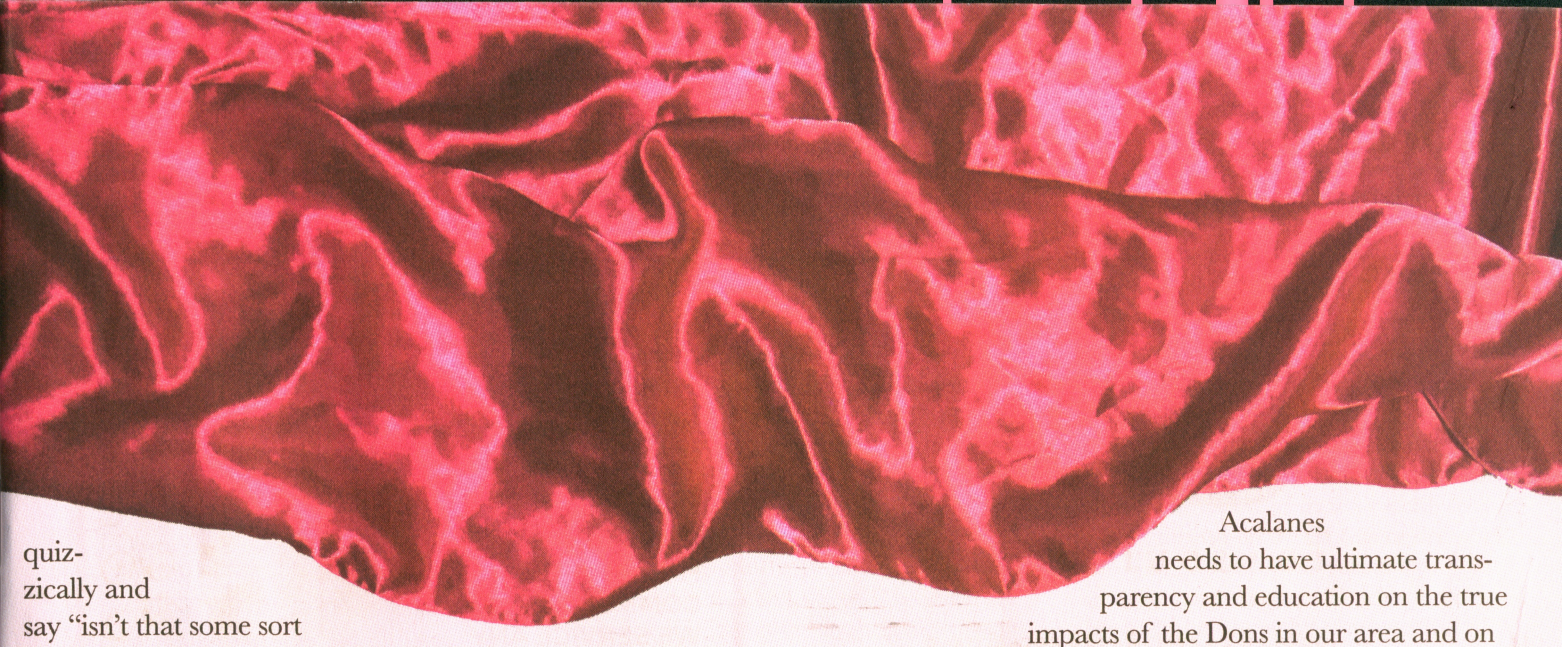
However, keep in mind that this school district was primarily non-Latine and predominantly white from the start of its history. No matter the intention that the class of 1941 had in choosing the mascot, a historical "tribute" was not historically appropriate and never met. This vaguely Spanish term and "tribute" quickly garnered a stereotypical and culturally inaccurate image that varied throughout the years. At first glance, the mascot sported a look inspired by a South-American gaucho (or cowboy), with a flat-topped hat and a scarf tied around his neck, most commonly found in Argentina. The 'Don' then morphed into a man with a mustache outfitted in a costume reminiscent of mariachi singers, complete with embroidered lapels and a Mexican sombrero. Other versions of the don included pistols, ponchos, cowboy hats, and bandanas.

While all of these Latino male figures could be considered Dons in their respective countries, there is no clear distinction drawn between the intricacies of each culture 'represented' in the mascot. Therefore, the vague mixing of distinct Latine cultures under Acalanes' anglicized and harmful term (Dones vs. Dons) creates a feeling of alienation towards the local Latine population. These harmful caricatures are a constant reminder of the school's disregard for the richness, the uniqueness, and the true merit that the Latine community offers beyond a meager mascot.

And yes, I acknowledge that the school rebranded with the Acalanes A and no longer promotes these stereotypical images as of the mid-2010s. And yes, I acknowledge that the school is slowly phasing out the "Don" from its everyday language.

But one of the core issues surrounding the Don is not only its image but the elusiveness of its meaning. If you were to ask multiple Acalanes students about what their mascot is, most would look





quizzically and say “isn’t that some sort of cowboy?”. And even if Acalanes markets the ‘Don’ as a symbol of community or phases it out from its catchphrases (Go ACA!), the word is still in use and inherently retains its history in Latin America.

One of the key aspects behind the ‘Dons’ in Latine history is its fundamental colonial and feudal roots. The Spanish subjugation of indigeneous peoples happened all over the Americas and is a recurring event throughout Latine and worldwide history, and this area was no exception when the Spanish colonized the native Saclan people. Recognizing the Dons’ and other Europeans’ devastating effects on the native people of this land and on their descendants is fundamental to understanding how problematic our mascot truly is.

In remaining silent about the true origin of the ‘Don’, the school sends mixed signals to its student body on how ‘acceptable’ its mascot really is. As a result, students may ask why the ‘Don’ is only reserved for spirit events, which would lead to them asking what a Don is and why it is not still used today.

This may open up a variety of student sentiments; either there is an instant understanding of the figure’s stereotyped past, or there is resentment towards the ‘sensitive’ community that prohibits mascot fun at football games.

As a result, not defining the term ‘Dons’ or explaining its history to our students only leads to growing misinformation of the term and a sense of closed-mindedness about Acalanes’ continued use of it. And while many may believe that the matter of the Dons is one of “low-interest” at Acalanes, it would most certainly not be if more of our students know what they are really saying when they yell “GO DONS!” at spirit events or when they see the old images on Google. If the school fails to address the ongoing dialogue about the ‘representation’ and problematic implications our mascot provides, our students will believe that it is not an important matter.

Now, there is no simple, end-all solution or route to take for the school’s complicated past with the Don. But to preface any kind of solution or plan of action concerning this issue, Acalanes needs to have ultimate transparency and education on the true impacts of the Dons in our area and on its own journey with the portrayal of the Don.

This action is important for two reasons. For one, the school can either keep the mascot as it is and not do anything, contradicting its mission for informing students and its goal to promote equity, or it can change its mascot completely. For both of these routes, acknowledging the history is the most crucial step of the process, as you cannot erase the history that went down on this land and on this campus. Acalanes must not avoid these difficult conversations: it should openly acknowledge its existence, learn from it, and have constructive dialogues with those affected to ensure that it never happens again.

The school can introduce this topic to its students in a variety of ways, whether in an orientation for incoming Acalanes students or at the very least as a module slide for its students on Canvas.

But, most importantly, it must bring the dialogue to inform and share with all of its students in a more in-depth way, with a Cohort Academy lesson being the perfect place to start. In the most recent equity council meeting headed by the Latinos Unidos Club, it was the first time many of our students, Latine and non-Latine, got together to discuss the origins of the mascot, the school’s history with it, and how it has impacted its Latine students. While we have reached that demographic through that specific event, it must be a topic introduced and discussed with all students that consider themselves an ‘Acalanes Don’.

Throughout this process of learning, relearning, and rebuilding, the school should also make an active effort to include more Latine history and support for its Latine community. Because, frankly, it is not possible to keep a colonial-era and stereotypical mascot as a “tribute” to Latine culture for 80 years and have this year be the first year that we celebrate Latine history. If we do not incorporate support for Latine history, culture, and experience into our curricula and discuss our area’s experiences with colonialism, do we really call ourselves ‘the Home of the Dons’?

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Philanthropy is No Excuse for Tax Evasion

It's time to put the ultra-wealthy in the limelight

Alex Ariker | Liaison Editor

Humans have plenty of wealth and commodities, yet we fail miserably in their distribution. While billionaires soar into space on Jeff Bezos' rocket, over 37 million Americans live below the poverty line.

The vast majority of corporate America, such as investment banks, absolute return funds, and the ultra-wealthy in general, evade taxes through selfish loopholes and use donations to charities as an excuse for not paying taxes.

In the current day, evading taxes is practically synonymous with possessing extreme wealth. From 2014-2018, the 25 wealthiest Americans paid just 3.4 percent of their real income in taxes, which is much lower than what the typical American pays in taxes. Income tax ranges from ten percent to 37 percent, more than ten times greater than what these ultra-wealthy pay.

In stark contrast ProPublica reported that Jeff Bezos paid just 0.98 percent of his wealth increase in taxes, Warren Buffet paid 0.10 percent, and Elon Musk paid 3.27 percent.

One of the primary ways billionaires legally bypass paying their fair share of taxes is by lowering their reported income. The federal income tax only taxes wages, salaries, bonuses, and tips, earnings that are easy to track and tax. However, the net worth and income of many billionaires comes from stocks or other financial securities, assets taxed at a significantly lower rate of 20 percent.

Even worse, if the stock or security is never sold, or the capital gains from selling the stock were never realized, the government can't tax anything. So, rather than selling their stocks, the ultra-wealthy instead take out loans secured against their assets, or stocks in this example, to pay for their lifestyle.

Despite earning more money than the majority of society, the top 0.01 percent pays a disproportionately low amount of taxes, burdening the middle and lower classes with the responsibility to support the government.

This is unethical, but the problem is larger than just tax evasion. A few of the same billionaires who avoid taxes donate the majority of their net worth to charitable causes over the course of their life.

While this may seem like a solution or counterbalance to not paying taxes, it's not. Philanthropy often does not erase the negative impact that the methods the ultra-wealthy use to enrich themselves leave on society.

One example of this lies in the Sackler family, who are the founders of Purdue Pharma, the company responsible for producing the highly addictive opioid painkiller, OxyContin. In the late 1990s, Purdue Pharma created an aggressive and misleading advertisement campaign for OxyContin, resulting in widespread overprescription of the drug and consequent misuse and diversion of it. Their production and sale of OxyContin are responsible for many of the deaths in the ongoing opioid crisis.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, drug overdose has claimed the lives of more than 500,000 Americans in the past two decades, and "opioids are currently the main driver of drug overdose deaths."

At the same time, the Sackler family has donated tens of millions of dollars in acts of philanthropy. Does their philanthropy make them free from guilt or blame? No. If the goal of the Sackler family was to help society with their philanthropy, they would have avoided predatory actions that in part caused the opioid epidemic.

Additionally, Warren Buffet is an outspoken supporter of tax reform and an avid philanthropist, but his investment company, Berkshire Hathaway, invests in companies that are detriments to society.

In a 1999 interview, Buffet claimed his investing strategy was "not assessing how much an industry is going to affect society, or how much it will grow, but rather determining the competitive advantage of any given company and, above all, the durability of that advantage."

Buffet's disregard for society has clearly been seen through his support of the monopolistic company Verisign, and through his ownership of 13 percent of Moody's, a credit rating agency that played a role in causing the 2008 financial crisis.

Buffet and others like him use philanthropy as an excuse to avoid paying taxes and to save face, while their business practices and tax avoidance hurts society.

To further exacerbate this problem, many of the ultra-wealthy don't ever donate money to charity. Although some choose to, society's social welfare should not depend on the off chance that a billionaire decides to indulge in philanthropy.

Forbes estimates that the 400 richest people in America, who have a combined net worth of $3.2 trillion, have donated a total of $171 billion. This means that they have paid out a measly 5.4% of their sum net worth in taxes, a number far less than what they would pay if they were held accountable to income tax rates.

This issue has very real consequences. According to the Washington Post, tax evasion at the top costs the government roughly $175 billion in yearly revenue, a significant amount of money that could otherwise be spent on improving social welfare or bolstering the economy.

Instead of donating money to preserve their public image, the ultra-wealthy should attack the problems of society directly from the roots, given that they have the means to do so.

An increase in the government's supply of tax dollars could support the disproportionate amount of Americans who continue to suffer while many of the ultra-wealthy fuel their lavish lifestyles. It is up to us to vote for legislation that truly taxes the ultra-wealthy and to spread awareness that despite their philanthropy, most of the world's ultra-rich still defraud America of hundreds of billions of dollars.

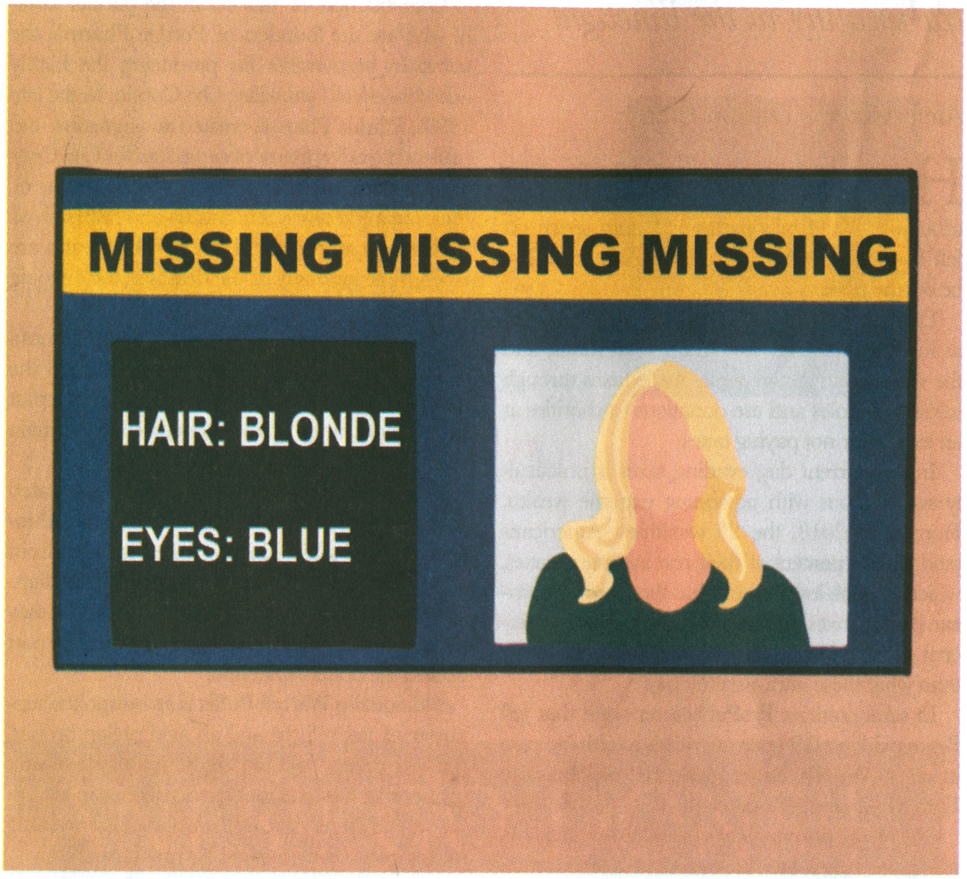
Blueprint Photo / Ella Alpert

Opinion

Say Their Names: Recognizing Injustices in the Coverage of Missing People

Underrepresentation of women of color harms equity

Shrida Pandey | Head Online Section Editor



Blueprint Cartoon / Sabrina Agazzi

Victoria Gonzalez. Dawnita Wilkerson. Melinda Felder. Mary Johnson. Tamika Huston. Lauren Cho. Ashley Heavyrunner. Veronica Reyes-Diaz. Jennifer Caridad. Aubrey Dameron. Jelani Day. Desheena Kyle.

All of these women of color, alongside so many others, have gone missing in the United States. However, it is quite likely most Americans haven't heard any of their names when they take a glance at the news coverage for missing women. The disappearance of Gabby Petito in August 2021 showcased the inequality women of color receive in the media and that lack of attention's consequences.

A frequent tendency in the media's news coverage of missing people is to spotlight blonde hair and blue-eyed young women with a kind smile meant to band the American public together to find her. Sometimes the women are found and sometimes they aren't, but eventually, the news cycle fades and the woman disappears from the front pages. This cycle repeats constantly every month, with a new name but the same white features splashed across all social media and news platforms.

At the same time, the American media portrays missing brown and Black women with a kind of disregard that seems to say: their lives don't matter. According to a study by Northwestern University sociologist Zach Sommers, white women were more likely to be given news coverage than their proportion of missing cases compared to people of color. The scenario Sommers studied is called 'missing white woman syndrome', where white women receive a higher media coverage compared to people of color.

Justice for Gabby Petito is necessary, but what about our brown and Black brothers and sisters? Why is their news coverage nonexistent compared to their white counterparts? Why do their lives matter less in the eyes of the media?

The answer is simple: their skin color. Like other biases people of color have to face, the media treats underrepresented minorities far worse than their white counterparts. This continues to bring deadly consequences to missing women of color because if the media doesn't cover it, then they have a lesser chance of being found. According to the Black and Missing Foundation, missing people cases with people of color in the United States are less likely to be solved compared with cases involving white people.

Furthermore, people of color account for 40 percent of the missing people's cases in America compared to them making up 24 percent of the population. Without giving them accurate coverage, they are not only underrepresented but erased from the conversation.

One Bay Area news anchor, Frank Somerville, took a stand last month and advocated for more representation for people of color in the media. He asked that statistics and facts about Black women and their experience with domestic violence be played on the station. In response, he was promptly removed from the station.

This example accurately reflects how the media treats people of color. When Somerville, who is white, tried to be an ally, he lost his job due to the small request he made to give people of color a bigger platform. His story, and that of many others, creates the notion that speaking up for people of color can cost white allies their jobs.

One of the reasons this occurs is due to the lack of representation in the newsroom. According to the American Society of News Editors, Hispanic, Black, and Asian women make up less than five percent of newsroom personnel in both print and online. They make up even less of the leadership in these newsrooms. If there isn't representation in reporters, coverage won't be diverse either.

The news media needs to be more diverse and give people of color a platform. Otherwise, the inequality people of color have to face will persist. It is time to give minorities more recognition and equal treatment. Only then can we have a more equitable society.

Breaking Through our Overly Competitive School System

From a young age, the education system forces students to compete amongst each other to achieve perfection

Brendan Connelly | Online News Editor

For the vast majority of Americans, high school is a critical precursor to college and adult life. Students' experiences and choices in high school often dictate what they will do for the rest of their life. At the very least, these experiences impact the people they associate with, the college experience they may have, and many of their core beliefs.

The importance of high school is not lost on students. They see reminders of this everywhere - from their parents, their teachers, and their peers. As the workload piles up, school becomes the sole focus of many students' lives.

This focus destroys students. If they aren't achieving perfect grades, they feel like they are essentially failing at their one job: school. Furthermore, in their quest to achieve such perfection, students feel as though they must be better than their peers in all aspects of life.

This pressure builds into competitiveness. Essentially, the American education system forces children into a vicious and endless competition to outperform each other.

This competition begins at a very young age. As soon as students enter middle school, they are graded on the antiquated letter-grading scale. Teachers grade every minuscule thing a student does, which serves as a reflection of the student's understanding and effort. On a larger scale, each grade is tangible evidence of a student's intelligence, work ethic, and overall ability to perform.

The concept of this omnipresent grading system is one of many aspects of the school system that adds to its competitiveness. In the vast majority of jobs, workers aren't constantly graded. While jobs may have high standards for quality and hard work, these standards are entirely different.

For instance, if someone owns a restaurant, their customers grade them on a daily basis. However, one customer complaint doesn't make or break the business--the success of the restaurant depends on the overall quality of the food, service, and environment.

This metaphorical restaurant is not different from our education system, which forces competition between students to achieve ever-elusive perfection. This competition is ultimately out of their control, despite any hard work they may put in to ensure success.

In high school, this competition only increases in light of college applications. Students who want to be hyper-competitive--as many feel obligated to be--take extraordinarily hard, time-consuming classes.

In Lafayette and at Acalanes, this competition is absurd. While at many public and private schools around the country, taking one or two Advanced Placement (AP) or honors classes is all that's allowed. In the Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD), many students feel obligated to take a course load of entirely honors or AP courses.

Given the course description, AP classes require multiple hours of homework each day, so taking six or seven of them would be physically impossible.

Combining this immense workload with constant judgment only leads to stress, anxiety, and an interest in school and the competition itself. As if this is not enough, students then face pressure from colleges through standardized tests and applications that are often rejected in a matter of seconds.

The question that students must then ask themselves at one point is: "What have I learned? Am I happy? Do I even want this?" Will the answer really be something to the point of "a great variety of important, interesting tools that I will use the rest of my life"?

For me, it's this pointlessness that makes this competitiveness so hard. If I felt like I was actually striving towards something, towards a goal other than to do better than my peers, then maybe this competition would be fun, interesting, and merited.

To have a productive, effective, and rewarding education system, middle schools, high schools, and colleges need to revolutionize how they grade their students. Schools need to give students more control over their own choices and future.

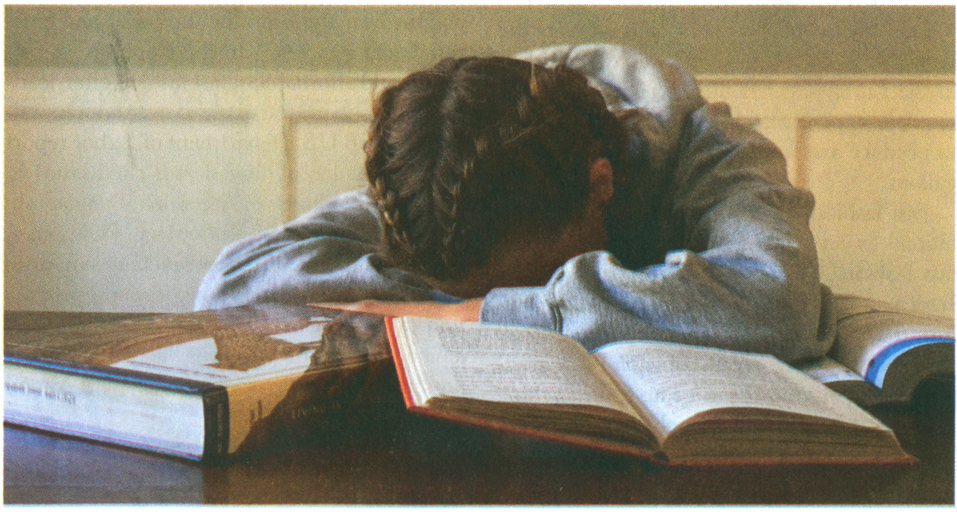
This requires a combination of changes. First, students' grades should depend on several individual conversations with their teachers. While there may be some exceptions, this could allow all students to most effectively communicate their understanding of the material.

Humans communicate most effectively face to face, one on one. Communicating learning with teachers should be no different. This will prevent needless grading and misunderstandings that plagues students with stress.

Additionally, students need to have the option to specialize in high school whenever they feel ready. Essentially, if students can take classes they find interesting, school will not just be about competition: it will be about learning, which ultimately should be the goal.

And lastly, expectations have to change. Teacher expectations, college expectations, and even employer expectations have to change. Performance in a variety of subjects during one's teenage years cannot be allowed to set up their whole life. Education needs to be about learning, not judging.

Blueprint Photo / Emma Uffleman



Opinion

Fast Fashion is Ruining the Earth

How cyclical trends contribute to climate change

Julia Poole | Blueprint Coordinator

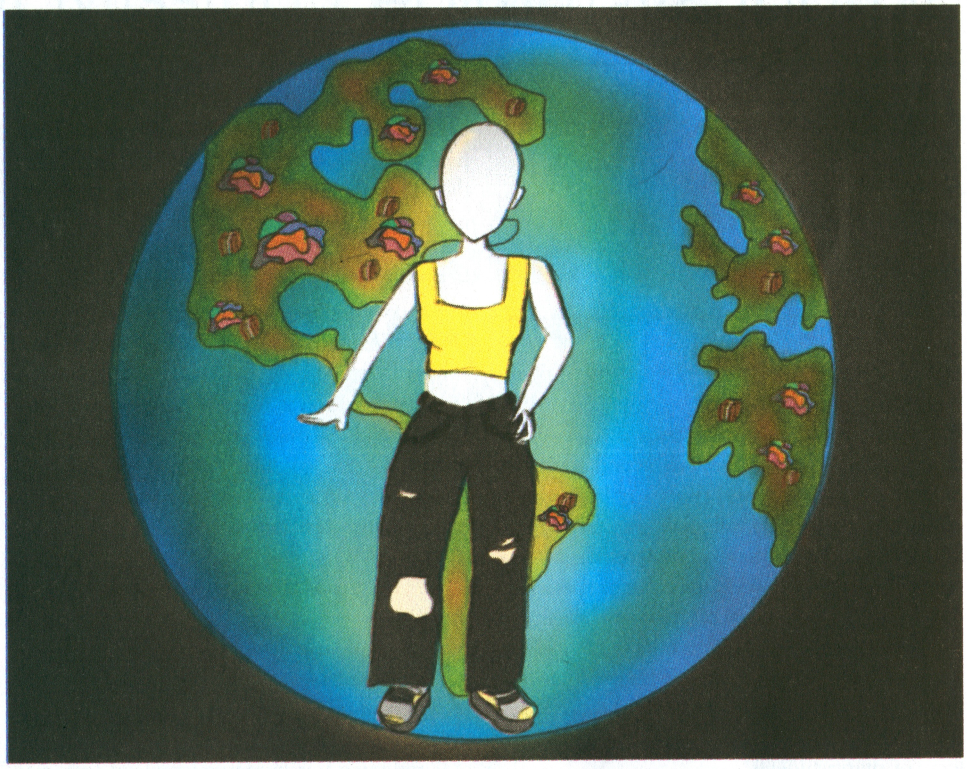
Amidst the raging wildfires of the West and the lingering effects of Hurricane Ida in the East and South, the realities of climate change seem like one long, continuous, punch-in-the-face. Yet as the earth slowly crumbles around us, many people refuse to alter their practices to live more sustainably and help reduce the impact of human activities on the environment. One of these perpetrators is the fast fashion industry.

While many teens look forward to shopping with their friends, perusing the most recent "catwalk look-alikes" on the internet, or gazing at the wide selection of looks at the MET Gala, they often do not consider that these actions contribute to humanity's demise.

The New York Times first coined the term 'fast fashion' in the early 1990s to describe the clothing retailer Zara's mission to deliver a garment from the design stage to stores in under 15 days. Fast fashion refers to cheaply produced and priced garments that copy the latest catwalk styles and get pumped quickly through stores in order to maximize current trends.

While all fashion takes up natural resources, fast fashion in particular inflicts harm on the environment because it promotes a culture of waste and apathy towards mass consumption. No longer is shopping a necessity that takes place biannually to ensure warmth for survival--now shopping is a hobby, pushed by cheaper clothes, faster trend cycles, and the growth of online retail sites.

This 'hobby' makes the fashion industry the second-biggest consumer of water: according to the European Parliament, one cotton shirt requires approximately 700 gallons of water to produce and a pair of jeans requires 2,000 gallons.


Blueprint Cartoon / Melaney Noguera

Fast fashion also contributes to plastic pollution, as synthetic materials dominate the fast fashion market. A 2017 report from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) estimated that 35 percent of all microplastics--tiny pieces of non-biodegradable plastic--in the ocean come from washing synthetic textiles such as polyester or nylon. These microplastics absorb toxic chemicals from detergents and fire-retardant chemicals, and through biomagnification travel through sea creatures like plankton to humans. A study conducted by the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI) found that 25 percent of the seafood humans consume contains microplastics.

Overall, the fast fashion industry makes up 8-10 percent of global carbon emissions--more than all international flights and maritime shipping combined, according to the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP).

While more developed nations such as the United States and Australia benefit the most from the fast fashion industry, low-income nations bear the brunt of the social and environmental impact. With the emphasis on efficiency and affordability, fast fashion often leads companies to prioritize speed over human welfare. A 2018 U.S. Department of Labor report found evidence of forced and child labor in the fashion industry in Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Philippines, Turkey, and Vietnam. Low-income countries often hold a large portion of fashion production due to 'cheap labor, vast tax breaks, and lenient laws and regulations,' according to the author and socioenvironmental activist Naomi Klein.

Because young women between 18 and 24 make 80 percent of fashion apparel, according to non-profit Remake, the fast fashion industry's emphasis on cheap labor contributes to gender inequality and a decreased standard of living. Primarily female garment workers in Bangladesh make approximately $96 per month, 3.5 times lower than the amount listed by the Bangladeshi government's wage board in order to live above the poverty line, according to the World Resources Institute (WRI).

In addition to worsening conditions for workers in low-income nations, the fast fashion industry devastates developing countries' ecosystems with developed nations' waste. The WRI states that while the average consumer bought 60 percent more clothes in 2014 than 2000, they kept the garment for half as long. Similarly, the equivalent of one garbage truck full of clothes is burned or dumped in a landfill every second, according to UNEP.

Many Americans donate these clothes to charity under the assumption that they will be reused, but the majority of fast fashion cannot be resold due to the poor quality. Thus, developed nations end up shipping all of these discarded clothes to faraway countries, where it dominates marketplaces, obstructs beaches, and overloads dumps.

At Ghana's Kamanto market, for example, around 15 million items of used clothing from Western countries arrive each week, and the entire population of Ghana is only 31 million, according to CBS News.

So after hearing all of these statistics, you might be wondering why anyone would participate in fast fashion in the first place. The answer lies in the social pressures of the 21st century.

Teens rush to snatch up the latest claw clip or cropped cardigan in order to meet the demands of peer pressure and 'fit in'. And companies don't hold back from promoting this behavior: the European Parliament reports that Zara puts out 24 collections per year, while H&M offers between 12 and 16. This leads consumers to believe that cheap clothing acts as a "perishable good" that should be thrown out after next to no use.

To combat the rise of fast fashion and its detrimental effects on the environment, we must demote this "trend" ideology. According to The True Cost documentary from 2015, the world consumes about 80 billion new pieces of clothing every year, 400% more than the consumption 20 years ago. This percentage will only continue to rise if we do not implement government regulations that require clothing companies to use only sustainable, long-lasting materials and enact a campaign to reverse the social dynamic that depends on "trends" to look cool. We must inform the public about the effect these companies and consumer shopping practices have on the environment, and wield consumer power to force companies like SHEIN and Zara to switch to a sustainable business model. We must also promote companies like Patagonia and Whimsy + Row that already use business models that reuse clothes or maximize their shelf life.

So please--buy less, recycle or repurpose old clothes, support sustainable companies, and choose quality over quantity. Because if we don't change our habits, the real, beautiful world as we know it will be consumed by our own misguided materialism.

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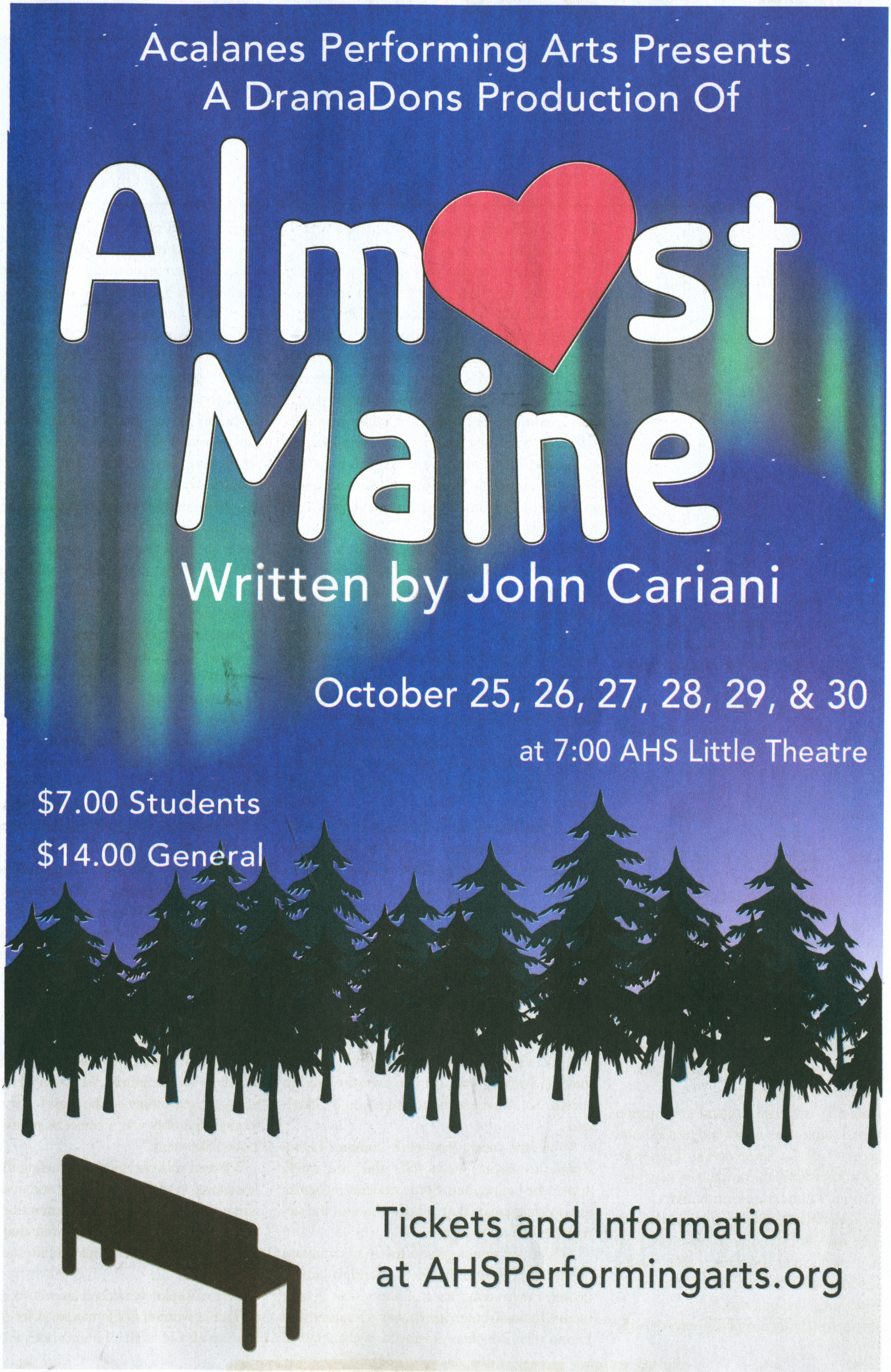

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The Popular Lies and Hidden Truths In Film

A look into the flawed portrayals of Latine people in the media

Lyanne Wang and Natalie Hiatt | Feature Editor and Staff Writer

With his legs bouncing and hands gripping the armrests, a young boy stares at the movie screen, eagerly awaiting to enter a world of superheroes and magical powers. As the scenes unfold, however, the boy's excitement diminishes as he realizes that his look-alike on screen appears to be more of a villain than a superhero.

As Latine Heritage Month takes place from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15, community members discuss the flaws of Latine representation in the media to better understand the misconceptions presented.

Both on screen and behind the camera, the film industry routinely fails to sufficiently incorporate Latine representation. According to the Hollywood Diversity Report from 2019 by the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), Latines comprise a mere 4.6 percent of movie roles and 5.6 percent of actors in television shows despite making up nearly one fifth of the U.S. population.

Within the limited roles that Latine people do play, their presence is often an attempt to fulfill the theme of a show rather than to offer genuine representation.

"When my family and I do see Latine representation, it's because that's what the theme is. It seems much less common that [Latine representation is] just present in a wide swath of movies and media," Health and Social Development teacher Jada Paniagua said.

Additionally, misrepresentation is common throughout Latine roles in shows, movies, and other forms of media. Some people disapprove of but still acknowledge the amount of racial stereotypes within Latine characters in film.

"They feel awful to list, and I don't believe them to be true, but some stereotypes are [that they are] uneducated, do blue collar menial work, agricultural work, and are often criminal and low income," Panigua said.

One of the many recurrent stereotypes is the idea that all Latine people have limited vocabularies and strong accents.

"They have actors use very stereotypical Spanish accents, very heavy, like we don't know English. Especially [with] the actress Sofia Vergara. She is kind of forced to put on an extremely heavy accent for all of the roles that she plays to make it seem funnier," junior Jiselle Sicilia said.

The film industry often creates characters that play into harmful stereotypes of Latine people in order to make these characters more appealing to the audience. Latina women's roles in particular are subject to hypersexualization in order to make these women seem more alluring and exotic.

Rita Moreno, a Puerto Rican actress, visited Acalanes in November 2014 and shared her experience with being a Latina woman in the movie business.

"Rita Moreno came here… She didn't explicitly say it then, but I've since seen her in interviews where she's teased at that more and she has said that she was basically playing a sex symbol, a kind of exotic woman in smaller parts. Even after she won the Best Supporting Actress Award, those were the types of roles she was getting for a long time," Spanish teacher Elizabeth Gough said.

In many instances, people behind the scenes force Latine actors and actresses to play stereotypical roles, limiting the talent of these performers and sending a message to the public that Latine people are not worthy of playing anything other than their perceived personas.

"I remember reading an article in Vogue about Salma Hayek. It was an interview with her after she won for her movie Frida, and she talked about how when she went to Hollywood, she was only given the roles of maids or prostitutes, and that there was an agent who said to her, well that's all you're gonna get because you have an accent. So, those are the roles for you," Gough said.

While the media frequently confines Latina women to playing sexual roles, the same rarely applies for Latino men. Some students recognize the dividing factor that gender plays on the stereotypes of Latine people.

"There are stereotypes in the representations of Latine people in the media, [and] it can be broken down along lines of the visible gender binary. Latina women are heavily sexualized and Latino men are often portrayed as criminals or abusers, and it gets much more complex than that. Latine people are often cast for roles that exacerbate stereotypes or are stereotypically negative, such as gardeners, maids, and dropouts," senior Sofia Gonzalez said.

Students emphasize that although film representation often does not reflect reality, it still impacts the perception of Latine people in the real world. For example, the stereotype that many Latine people are linked to drug cartels wrongfully associates all Latine people with drugs.

"It's very drug related when it comes to any Hispanic films, like there has to be some type of drug to be considered interesting and related to Hispanic. It's really sad. One of the questions that a lot of Hispanics get asked, even me as a kid, [is] if one of my parents sold drugs, and that's not what Latines should be known for," Sicilia said.

Latine children who grow up watching movies or shows that portray Latine folks in a negative light may end up having altered perceptions of their own identity.

"Kids are extremely influenced by what they see in the media. So seeing that, they grow up with the idea that that's what Latine people are, [and] that's what they are. It's not fair that that's the kind of representation we get," Sicilia said.

Not only does misrepresentation harm Latine people's self-esteem, but the lack of representation does so as well. Some Latina girls note how seeing only white women in the media as they grew up established narrow beauty standards in their minds of which they did not belong.

"In the beauty culture, there's a standard to look a certain way, and a lot of the time you only see white girls being portrayed as 'this is what you're supposed to look like.' I definitely see that," junior Gema Villafana-Perez said. "Growing in a culture that only values people who look a certain way definitely did, in my head when I was younger, influence the way I saw myself. I thought the only way I could be pretty was if I looked like them."

Between misrepresentation fueling the hypersexualization of Latina women and underrepresentation separating Latina women from typical beauty standards, students reiterate that the representation of Latine people in film starkly contrasts reality.

"I have absolutely noticed an oversexualization of Latina women in the media. A lot of people have an idea of what a Latina's body is supposed to look like, but that's not the case at all. We all have different bodies and look different," Riegel said.

In addition to directly impacting Latine people, misrepresentation may intensify the negative views that other ethnic groups hold about the Latine community.

"These stereotypes are harmful not only to the Latine community but to all communities and racial and ethnic groups. They exacerbate stereotypes that other groups have about Latines and worsen the issues of colorism within the community," Gonzalez said.

Colorism, the discrimination against individuals with dark skin tones, is a present concern in the film industry that influences the different roles that Latine people receive on set.

"Colorism is a large issue in Latine representation. When Latines are represented on screen, the lighter skinned ones usually get the good roles, the hero per se, and the darker ones get the bad roles of maids or criminals," Gonzalez said.

Despite the multitude and inaccuracy of racially stereotypical roles in the media, this misrepresentation no longer surprises students.

"My culture has been marginalized throughout its entire existence. The only time I really see Hispanic cultures [and] Latines represented in any media is usually stereotyped. And again, that doesn't really surprise me because our society was built on the fantasization of being white. That's what the U.S. valued," junior Gema Villafan-Perez said.

The profusion of racist portrayals of Latine people in the media is no coincidence; throughout history, U.S. citizens often promoted certain stereotypes in order to justify Americans' political acts.

"A lot of the negative stereotypes that we have seen, have actually been used to justify historical events in the past. For example…. showing the stereotype of a lazy or an unintelligent Hispanic really played nicely into the rewriting of history to make it seem like the U.S. had a right to take California, and New Mexico, and Arizona, because the whites were these smart, hard working people taking the land from these people who maybe didn't deserve them. The stereotypes were a way of justifying bad behavior by some of the other people in the United States," Gough said.

Today, representation in the media is still heavily intertwined with political views. The way the media portrays Latine people directly affects Latine communities on issues such as immigration and deportation.

"Media has a powerful influence on non-Latino perceptions about Latines, and immigrants for that matter. Media portrayal has been both negative and positive towards Latines, but highly negative towards Latine immigrants which influenced people's political perspectives on immigration, and if they vote, on our immigration laws and policies," Gonzalez said.

Due to the immense impact that representation may have on real world events, many people emphasize the importance of recognizing the inaccuracies of stereotypes.

"It's important to acknowledge that these stereotypes aren't reality so we negate our preconceptions about Latines, which are mostly negative, and allow ourselves to see individuals for who they truly are," Gonzalez said.

Additionally, some people note that the media's portrayal of Latine people is not always inaccurate; the issue is, no matter if a stereotype contains truth to it or not, they reduce Latine people to solely acting as those stereotypes, ultimately stripping away other aspects of their identity.

"In a TED talk called The Danger of a Single Story, [they] say that the problem with the stereotype isn't that it's untrue, it's that it's incomplete. It's true that the majority of our agricultural workers are of Spanish speaking, Latino descent, and it's true that there are many of them that are immigrants, but [these stereotypes lead] children to grow up into adults that believe that that's the only story of folks of that identity… it impacts children of the Latine identity in limiting where they see themselves in the world," Panigua said.

Negative representation ultimately belittles Latine people by reducing people's idea of their potential in society.

"It absolutely limits people of color because, first of all, it does hurt them and their self esteem because they see those images and can start to feel that they are less worthy… But also those stereotypes affect other people, and maybe [do] not give certain people the kind of chances that they should have, or respect that they should have," Gough said.

Some community members urge local citizens to dismantle preconceived notions of Latine identity by constantly reminding oneself that Latine people are more than just the way the media portrays them.

"We happen to live in a community that's majority white, but not all. It's important to see the members of our community who are non-white but are vital to our community... Our Latine identity happens to be our custodial and our ground staff, but I think it's important to push ourselves beyond that one stereotypical identity and to not just allow that stereotype to be reinforced," Paniagua said.

Although the film industry has taken strides to better portray racial matters, some people acknowledge that these issues will take great effort and time to dismantle.

"One of the things I do appreciate is that some of Hollywood is willing to come out and talk about the issues that exist, whether it's gender issues or race issues… and yet, these issues are still existing. They have a lot of work to do," Ethnic Studies teacher Katherine Walton said.

Many students recommend viewing shows or movies that contain positive representation to begin the narrative of dismounting racial stereotypes.

"'Vivo', 'The Book of Life', 'Hamilton', 'In the Heights' [all have great representation]. I haven't personally researched any shows or movies, but I love the 1997 movie "Selena", which has Jennifer Lopez as Selena, and is directed by Gregory Nava, a Californian from San Diego of Mexican and Basque heritage," Gonzalez said.

Movies such as these help dismantle the negative stereotypes of Latine people.

"I think that in all of these shows, the people are portrayed, like first of all, as human. They're not fit into a stereotypical bubble, and they're portrayed in positive ways. They're portrayed in ways that are like role models to look up to, and to be admired. They're portrayed as productive, important members of our society, which I think is really important," Paniagua said.

To perpetuate the positive understanding of Latine people, students voice the importance of education.

"More education in schools about representation and the microaggressions that we face a lot [is important]. If we start educating students more, they won't have to get their opinions from social media, where everything changes and transforms to something bad," Sicilia said.

At Acalanes, classes such as Ethnic Studies open conversations on how stereotypes are present with the local community.

"We get to have these conversations in Ethnic Studies and then you also can take a kind of a micro-look at just our own campus... Granted, we're not Hollywood but we can see some of the same parallels happening in a smaller system. These are good conversations to have about where we get more perspectives that maybe we're not seeing or not getting in front of us," Walton said.

Additionally, clubs like the Latinos Unidos Club work to create a safe learning environment outside of the classroom. To celebrate Latine Heritage Month, the club teamed up with Leadership to raise awareness on Latine representation in the media.

"Latinos Unidos has partnered with the Diversity Board to put on quite a few events for Latine history month. We had a movie night about media representation where we watched Latinos Beyond Reel, and a student-led equity council and have several upcoming events…. Latinos Unidos is always here to provide a safe space to facilitate discussion, for people to ask questions or to simply provide a safe place for Latin

Continued on 36

Recipe of the Issue: Ceviche Peruano

By Marisa Guerra Echeverria | News Editor

As Latine Heritage Month reaches full swing, delve into various Latin-American cultures, histories, and their delicious foods. Ceviche, a traditional South American seafood dish cured with lime juice, has a perfect kick of spice, a bright citrusy taste, and notes of distinct flavors like ginger and cilantro. This dish is best when accompanied with tostadas and camote, or sweet potato.

Ingredients:

3-4 tilapia fillets
¾ cups of lime juice (approx. 7 limes)
1 small purple onion
2-3 tablespoons of ají amarillo (Peruvian yellow pepper paste)
½ teaspoon of salt
Cilantro (to sprinkle on top as garnish)
¼ cup of maize to pop with oil and salt
1 teaspoon of ground ginger

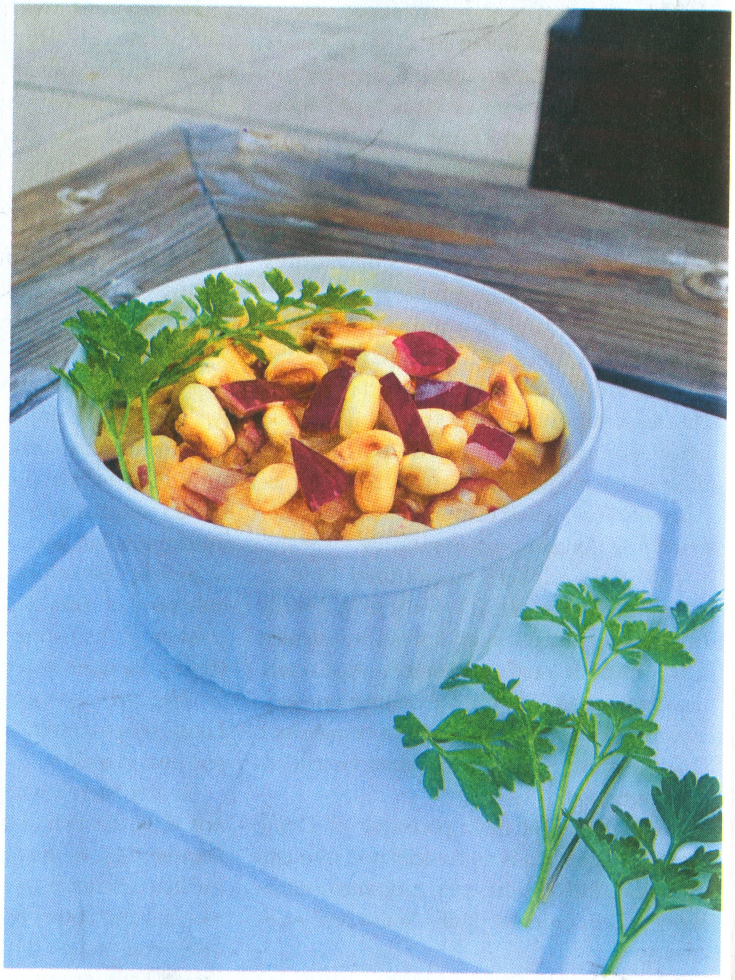
Directions:

Ceviche:

1. Cut the tilapia fillets into cubes (the smaller the pieces are, the easier they are to cure) and place them on a flat pan or ceramic.
2. Add the lime juice, salt, ground ginger, and the chopped purple onion into the pan with the fish.
3. Leave the mixture to sit for an hour and stir the dish every 15 minutes to make sure that the fish is properly cured. The fish should be opaque and firm when it is fully ready.
4. After the fish is fully ready, stir 2-3 tablespoons of the ají into the pan (depending on your spice preference).
5. When all done, spoon the fish and the remaining juice into plates and add cilantro for garnish.

Maize:

1. Put a pan on the stove at a medium temperature. Once the pan is hot, put in a bit of oil, pour in the maize, and add the salt. Cover the pan with a top.
2. Hold onto the top firmly as the maize starts cooking, as it will start popping. To properly cook all the maize, carefully move the pan while keeping your hand on the top.
3. After about 5 minutes, the maize should be popped and used for garnish in the ceviche.



Blueprint Photo/Marisa Guerra Echeverria

Sweet Potatoes:

1. Cook 3 sweet potatoes in a saucepan with water and simmer until the potatoes are soft, about 20 minutes.
2. Afterwards, let the potatoes sit at room temperature for 30 minutes.
3. When ready, peel the potatoes and cut up into slices to accompany the ceviche peruano.

Latine Representation

Continued from 35

students and their allies," Gonzalez said.

The push for awareness on campus reveals the impact that students can have on this issue.

"Acalanes students have good potential, we could really actually make a difference. I think that by teaching about our representation and our history, it could change a lot of perceptions about who Hispanics are," Sicilia said.

Although students acknowledge that equal representation requires enormous change, some community members remain hopeful that the Acalanes community is becoming a more inclusive and aware space.

"I think that things have changed. I know that my children are proud of their identity, but they also live and go to school in a more racially diverse community than Lafayette. And I'm hoping that maybe we've arrived at a time where society never tells kids that are growing up or folks that are immigrating here that there's a reason to be anything other than proud of who they are. I hope that's where we're getting, I know that that's what my children have been exposed to," Paniagua said.

Marvel's *Shang-Chi and The Legend of the Ten Rings* Review

An analysis of the newest addition to the Marvel Canon

Fallon Emmer and Josephine Teran | Copy Editor and Staff Writer

The savory scent of fresh popcorn fills the movie theater as Marvel fanatics eagerly await the latest expansion of the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings, released on Sept. 3, follows Shang-Chi's thrilling journey against his empire-dominating father. Comedic actor Simu Liu plays Shang-Chi, the son of fictional villain Xu Wenwu. Shang-Chi fights his father and his destructive armies with the help of powerful Chinese warriors, his sister, and his best friend.

Unlike previous Marvel films, this film's Chinese-centered plot and predominantly Asian-American cast attracts diverse audiences to theaters, with many long awaiting the type of representation that the film provides. Given Marvel's large platform, a movie of this caliber and reach gives Asian-Americans a more widespread representation.

Shang-Chi garnered a great amount of success in the box office and amongst critics. According to Forbes, the movie grossed a revenue of $160.99 million as of Sept. 18. It also received an IMDb score of 7.9 out of 10 and 92 percent on Rotten Tomatoes. Most students share this positive sentiment.

"I loved the Asian representation in the movie. Being Asian, it was nice to see that in a big movie. Another success was casting; the two main characters were super relatable and had good synergy." sophomore Celia Farell said.

Students also appreciate the relatability factor created by the film's emphasis on the daily lives and identity of Asian-Americans.

"I also really liked that the movie was not fully in English and there were many parts in Mandarin. I think that another success is that the movie speaks to many Asian-Americans, or simply hyphenated Americans in general and their dilemma with finding their identity." senior and co-vice president of Asian Student Union (ASU) Sylvia Deng said.

Main leads Liu and Awkwafina's performances balance the lighthearted comedy that Marvel movies typically possess while also maintaining the seriousness of the themes and situations presented in the film.

Like all Marvel films, this movie's production quality and computer-generated imagery (CGI) do not disappoint. The soundtrack includes a vast array of music, including genres ranging from contemporary R&B rap used alongside scenes that depict Shang-Chi's daily life, to traditional Chinese melodies played during battle scenes.

"The production was very well done, especially the music and graphics. I liked that they incorporated a lot of elements from Chinese folklore." Sylvia Deng said.

Although the American film industry has cast predominantly Asian-American casts before, this release is especially groundbreaking due to Marvel's large platform and its appeal to younger generations. Given the common idolization of superheroes among children, Asian-American students have a deeper appreciation for this new addition to the Marvel universe.

Blueprint Graphic/Freschtta Warres

"I think a lot of us grew up watching Marvel movies and I always thought they were really big role models in my life, but there was obviously no Asian representation for a very long time...I just think it's really amazing that I get to finally see a role model who's Asian." junior Adriana Medina said.

The 1973 comic that Shang-Chi was based on included racist depictions of Chinese people. The film's screenwriter, David Callaham, sought to steer away from the story's racist origins, by changing several of its offensive aspects. Students who watched the movie analyzed the effectiveness in refraining from racist portrayals.

"For the most part, the stereotypes and racist comments were mostly not really part of the film, or at least I didn't notice it. There are still some stereotypes in the martial arts aspect. One other part to consider is that it is part of Asian culture to have martial arts and combat in that form." Osanna Deng said.

As most movies do, however, the film received its fair share of criticism from students.

"It's cool that they're representing Asians, but I felt like they should have done that a lot earlier. They're just doing it now, because it's politically correct, which is fine but I just wish they did it earlier, instead of now which is riding on the wave," senior and co-vice president of ASU Akira Nannen said.

Others found the plot generic in contrast to other Marvel films.

"There was not much different plot-wise compared to other superhero movies. Other than the few aspects of Asian and Asian-American representation, such as the unfamiliarity [Shang-Chi's best friend] had with the culture, or the folk tales of the hidden village—even then the stories were pretty generic—there was not much else I found notable." Sylvia Deng said.

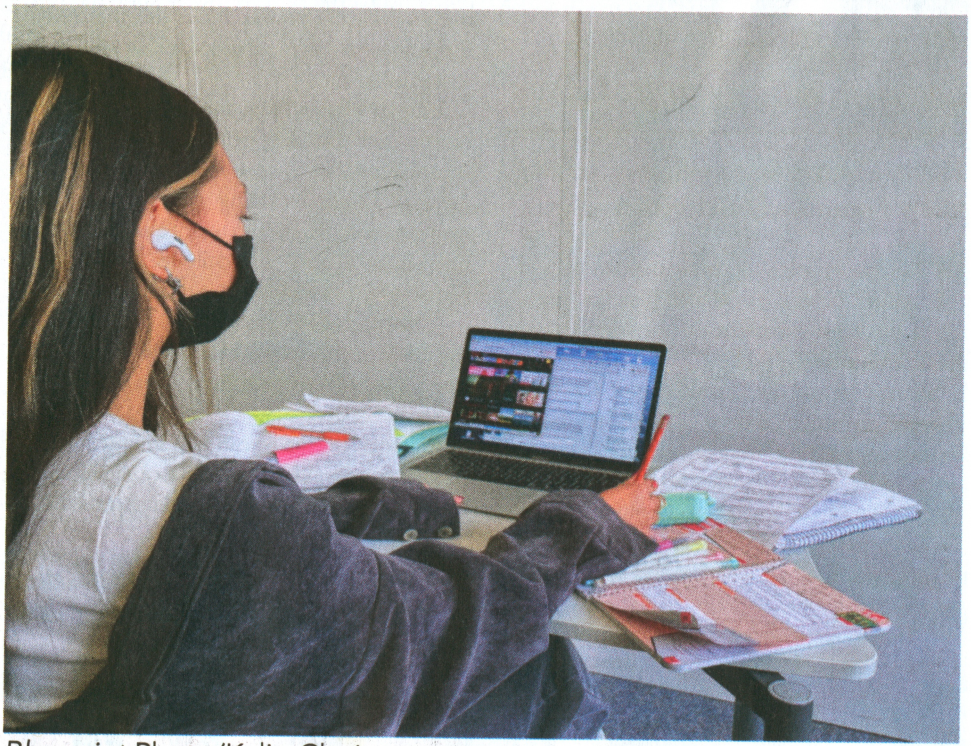
For the future of Asian representation in Marvel, the studio confirmed that Shang-Chi will be returning in future films, hinting at an even greater importance in the cinematic universe. And while it is unclear what that role may be, students seem to have confidence in Marvel's ability to do Shang-Chi's character justice.

"I do think Shang-Chi's character is here to stay. He's funny and relatable. I think that's the main part, a lot of people can relate to him and especially the Asian community that's been newly introduced into the superhero world." Osanna Deng said.

Due to the climate in which this movie was released, scan QR code to read about Asian-American discrimination:

Short-Form Media's Grip on Student Attention Spans

Social media platforms thrive off of short-form content but have major impacts on student attention spans



Blueprint Photo/Kylie Choi

Gabriella Gruber, Henry Hagel, and Justin Law | Online Shadow Editor and Staff Writers

As a student opens up his Algebra II assignment, Netflix flashes on the TV behind him and TikTok songs blare from his phone. After attempting the same math problem a couple times, he decides to take a break and scrolls through Instagram for a couple of hours.

With the growing popularity of social media and short-form content among young people, teachers noticed a shift in student behavior with unknown long term effects.

Short-form content videos are typically between 15 seconds and two minutes. The content is exciting enough to maintain interest, yet long enough to convey a message in an engaging way.

A study from the Microsoft Corporation shows that since the year 2000, the average human attention span decreased from 12 seconds to eight seconds, or about as long as a goldfish.

"I think [my shortened attention span] is due to social media. It's probably because social media offers many different things that happen at once," junior Taylor Radding said.

Many social media platforms integrated short-form content into their design. Tiktok's popularity led other apps to create their own similar versions. Facebook created Instagram Reels in Nov. 2019 and Spotlight, Snapchat's adaptation of TikTok, emerged the following year.

"Predominantly, I use Instagram. Personally, I like to see what my friends are posting and I watch Reels," Radding said.

While some students enjoy short-form content in their free time, it encroaches on the time others spend doing schoolwork.

"When I'm doing my homework sometimes, I'll just go on TikTok aimlessly and scroll through the For You page. Sometimes it distracts me, but then I have to put my phone away and get to work," freshman Sam Bishop said.

Some students feel the effects of their shortened attention spans while doing schoolwork.

"I get distracted very easily, and doing multiple tasks at the same time is hard. I think that my short attention span makes me procrastinate more, because it makes it much harder for me to focus. I also think that I'm having a more difficult time paying attention to lectures in my classes," Radding said.

While many students struggle with paying attention, teachers recognize the problem as well.

"Students are looking for immediate information, and if they're not getting the immediate information, they're tending to space out or disengage and not really pay attention," English teacher Erin Barth said.

In past years, teachers noticed lower attention spans in the students they educate. The creation of new technology in the past decades greatly contributed to this decrease.

"[There's been a change] this year especially, but I have also noticed it in the last ten years… We've been talking about that for a long time, since maybe cell phones," Human Social Development (HSD) teacher Liz Cusick said.

Since social media is relatively new, more issues like this may develop as time goes on, raising more challenges for both students and teachers alike.

In order to attempt to combat the issue of reduced attention spans, some teachers attempted to modify their curriculum.

"[The students] weren't able to sit for extended periods of time and read what I was asking them to read, so I switched it to something that had a little bit easier of a reading level… I need to get back up to where I want them to be," Barth said.

For now, educators are dealing with the issue at hand of reduced attention spans and are working to determine the best way to navigate through these new waters.

"I think that education is changing slowly but surely, and I think that we as educators are still trying to find how to change it or fight the battle of learning how to change it," Cusick said.

Survival in the Streaming World: Music's Symbiosis with Gamers

How entertainers stand out in the modern sea of content

Connor Faust, Valentina Penati, and El Reid | Feature Editor and Staff Writers

The internet revolutionized entertainment in the last two decades, creating a sea of media adrift with content creators. In an attempt to remain buoyant in the near 82 years worth of videos posted every day, streamers and musicians increasingly work together in order to grow and retain audiences.

Online gaming entertainers look to develop a musical following through their standing fanbase and collaborations with popular music creators, developing a mutual pool of fans.

When gaming personalities like Corpse or Dream release a song, their fan bases support them. The songs serve to boost their popularity by employing the reliable fans while expanding into new realms of entertainment. Mirroring this effect, creators will also appear in others' music videos to increase viewership.

Like Lebron James' name on a shoe brand, a channel's name hooks audiences into their music and songs associated with it.

"It doesn't have to be good music, people will listen to it purely because it has their favorite content creator in it," sophomore Sophie Graves said.

Musicians noticed the boost of viewership that streamers received when they made music and began to join in. Bella Poarch utilizes this effect in both of her songs, inviting 12 different gaming personalities to appear in her music videos.

One of the most well-known people to appear in the video, a variety gamer named Valkyrae, released a vlog about filming the music video. This video garnered over four million views. In contrast, the six videos she released prior averaged a mere 950,000 views. Her vlog increased her viewership and brought Poarch's songs into the minds of Valkyrae's fan base.

While some channels choose to partner with singers, others compose their own music. When Dream, a popular Minecraft Youtuber, released his song "Roadtrip" in February of this year, he gained 800,000 subscribers by the end of the week, 660,000 more than his current weekly average of 140,000. His involvement in the music industry greatly increased his following.

Despite gaming and music's crossovers usually ending in success, not all followers enjoy the new content.

"Dream is a Youtuber who makes Minecraft videos, and I love a lot of his Minecraft speedrun videos, however I don't like the other videos that he's making, and I also don't think I'd listen to his music," sophomore Kenny Zhou said.

Some may not be interested in streamers' music, but that does not change the fact that gamers' audience grows when they cross into the music industry.

The plethora of options for entertainment on sites like Youtube and Twitch may play a part in increased viewership. Youtube alone has 500 hours of content uploaded every minute. No person has the time to explore all these avenues, hence why crossovers become such an effective manner of boosting views.

Shorter, independent videos can also help attract new fans. Streamers often have hours of videos and ongoing stories that can be overwhelming for first time watchers. For those following certain creators already, music videos can be a great way to branch out to new entertainers.

"I like seeing the crossovers, because it introduces me to more people, and if I listen to a song or an album with someone in it and I learn they make other content I can go watch their other content," sophomore Samya Johnson said.

Blueprint Photo/Mara Korzeniowska

Connecting

No Longer Almost: The DramaDons Fall Play *Almost, Maine*

The DramaDons assemble for their first live performance in two years

Lulu Levy, Ruby Deeming, and Miles Thomas | Staff Writers

Two years of quiet curtains, closeted costumes, and a darkened stage finally conclude as the DramaDons await the debut of their fall play, "Almost, Maine".

The Acalanes Dramadons prepare for their eagerly anticipated production of "Almost, Maine" which runs from Oct. 25 through Oct. 30. As opening night approaches, actors, stagecraft, technical directors, and costume designers work to develop and perfect the show.

After last spring's innovative virtual Shakespeare performances of "Macbeth" and "A Midsummer's Night Dream", the Dramadons now return to live productions with a newfound appreciation.

"Not being able to be in the same room was just so hard and heartbreaking. It's fundamental for the work that we do. It's just so great to be back," drama teacher Ed Meehan said.

Unlike in past years where a typical performance plays for two nights in a full house, due to updated COVID-19 protocols, the show will run for an additional three nights with a limited half-capacity audience.

"We are forced to make the show a weeklong… which is some pressure, but it will be fun. It also gives people more options to see it," student play director and senior Clea Hansen said.

The play takes place in the fictional town of Almost, Maine, and consists of a series of nine vignettes, or short stories. Each is its own romantic tale about falling in or out of love. All the components are creatively woven together, and no more than three characters occupy the stage at one time.

The format of the play poses new challenges for the actors, as the style is very intimate. Actors and their scene partners work closely to master the ins and outs of their roles.

"There's a little bit of a disconnect where you're not interacting with every single actor, but it is definitely very personal to be learning and growing with one person," actress and senior Dagny Bradford-Urban said.

The construct of the story is highly relatable and will likely resonate with many students at Acalanes.

"It's not a gushy, sentimental type of love… the conversations are between real people. Though it's not a story that has actually happened, it seems real," Hansen said.

One feature of this Acalanes production is its lens on LBGTQ+ representation. The drama department continues to foster inclusivity and acceptance by portraying many types of relationships.

"We do a lot of gender-bending in a lot of our shows and this particular one has different versions where there is a gay couple and some non-binary folks and we chose different versions so we could have some inclusivity," tech director and senior Rylyn Groves said.

One vignette portrays a same-sex couple and the emotions they experience.

"It's sort of a story about internalized homophobia. The way that I see it is learning to accept one's own sexuality… and how that works out in a really realistic scenario," Bradford-Urban said.

Students predominantly lead the Acalanes drama program. Intricate costumes, detailed stage designs, and technical lighting are just a few of the areas that students can explore. Through them, students have the opportunity to develop strong leadership skills and the ability to deepen their creative talents.

"The plays that we do are almost entirely student-run… I'm a producer, and I am the director, but we also have the student director that does a good amount of that. And all of these production roles are filled by students," Meehan said.

Though audiences enjoy a seamless and visually appealing show, the stagecraft class spends countless hours behind the scenes perfecting and improving the design of the production. In "Almost, Maine", a crew of stagecraft specialists creates an ornate scene of natural winter foliage and other background details to enhance the viewer's experience.

"I don't think people realize how much time and how many different crews there are for each aspect of the show," stagecraft director and senior Briar Webb said.

To support the ambiance, tech crews work to create a lighting display to fit each scene.

"I find all of the pieces that need to happen and I put the puzzle together," Groves said.

After spending countless hours together in preparation for the show, cast members and production crews form a lasting bond and a welcoming community. Putting the show together is a dynamic experience, incorporating an all-encompassing range of skill sets.

"My favorite part about this is working collaboratively… people adding ideas and people coming in and doing work and working together to make an idea stronger, that's what I like most about it. It's not a solitary art, it's a collaborative art. An art form that actually encompasses all of the arts," Meehan said.

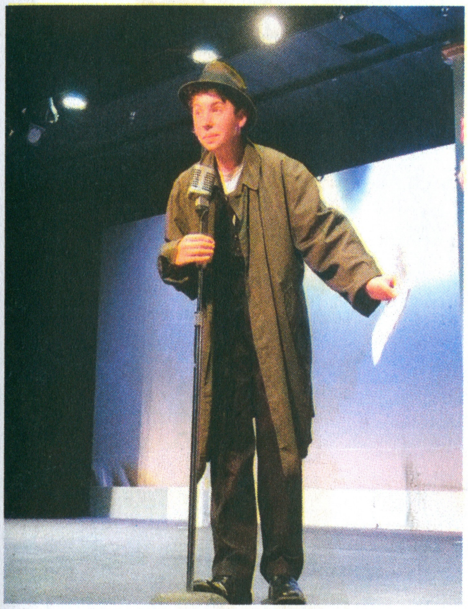
Tickets can be purchased online at ahsperformingarts.org

Blueprint Photo/Mara Korzeniowska

Artist Spotlight

Getting to know artists Eli Pockell-Wilson and Matthew Koo

Nastia Grits | Staff Writer



Courtesy Photo/Eli Pockell-Wilson

Eli Pockell-Wilson

Whether acting in the school musical or singing for Acapella, senior Eli Pockell-Wilson ingrains music in his daily life.

A shared love for music in Pockell-Wilson's family heavily influences him, stemming from his aunt and uncle both being musicians. Although he sometimes likes to play the guitar or piano, he mostly sticks to singing.

Along with senior Tracina Bertolami, Pockell-Wilson is the co-leader for the Acalanes acapella co-ed group Hermonix, in which he arranges songs for the twelve person group to perform.

"Eli has always been a super fun person to work with. He is always enthusiastic about music and performing. He's a super supportive friend as well, and his positive energy is really contagious and is great during rehearsals," Bertolami said.

Aside from singing, acting is prevalent throughout Pockell-Wilson's life. His involvement in acting began with performing for the Lafayette Town Hall Theatre. He starred in the Acalanes Drama productions of Cinderella and Urinetown, and plans to audition for the spring Beauty and the Beast musical.

"I think Eli is a very talented singer and actor and I was able to see him do both in the production of Urinetown in 2019. I think he is a natural leader and contributes a lot to our choir," junior Tess Gundacker said.

This year, he decided to branch out and do his first non-musical, Almost, Maine. In Almost, Maine Pockell-Wilson plays Chad, a married man with two kids who struggles to maintain a good relationship with his family.

"I think this might actually be one of my favorite roles because it is something so out of my comfort zone… It is always the most fun, the parts that are not like you, because it takes much more work and it feels like you are building a completely different identity than your actual self," Pockell-Wilson said.

The play will be running from Oct. 25 to Oct. 30. It will be the first in-person live production since the closing of school due to COVID-19.

"We have a very, very talented group of actors in the show, and it is always fun to see people in their element doing what they do best, but also it is a really interesting show. It is about love and different types of relationships, and it is a really funny show too… You should go get tickets," Pockell-Wilson said.

Courtesy Graphic/Matthew Koo

Matthew Koo

Always with an instrument or a pen in hand, senior Mathew Koo consistently expresses his noteworthy creative abilities.

Koo is an avid artist, a hobby that he adopted when he was little. Branching out, Koo has been able to profit off of his artwork by illustrating the book Another atypical Distinctively different Hilariously happy Delightful day (ADHD) by Karen Ann Leonard, as well as creating an illustration for a bank.

"[ADHD] was the first professional thing that I've done and it was a very good experience. It was weird because I had a deadline this time, so I had to plan out everything and how much I should do and how much I should charge and stuff," Koo said.

Students around campus often notice Koo's hard work. He utilizes different mediums for his intricate artwork, including pen, charcoal, watercolor, and paint.

"Matthew is an amazing artist and is very dedicated to his work. Many nights he stays up all night doing sketches and drawings. He is talented in many different mediums from ball point pen, charcoal, and more," senior Kiera Burrows said.

In addition to his artistic eye, Koo is also a talented musician. He began playing the trombone in the fourth grade. Now, he is a member of the Acalanes jazz band and wind ensemble, along with being in an outside group called the Diablo Valley Wind Symphony.

"He has been fantastic. I have had him freshman to senior year, and he has just really come so far. His tone, which is the resonance of the sound, is amazing. He is also super good at being self motivated on the trombone… I am just really lucky to have him as a student," Instrumental Music Director Lauren Gibson said.

To learn more about Acalanes performing arts, scan the QR code below

Quote of the Issue

"We are always going to have prejudices … I don't think we can change society. You can only change individual by individual. And you can change yourself" –Esmeralda Santiago

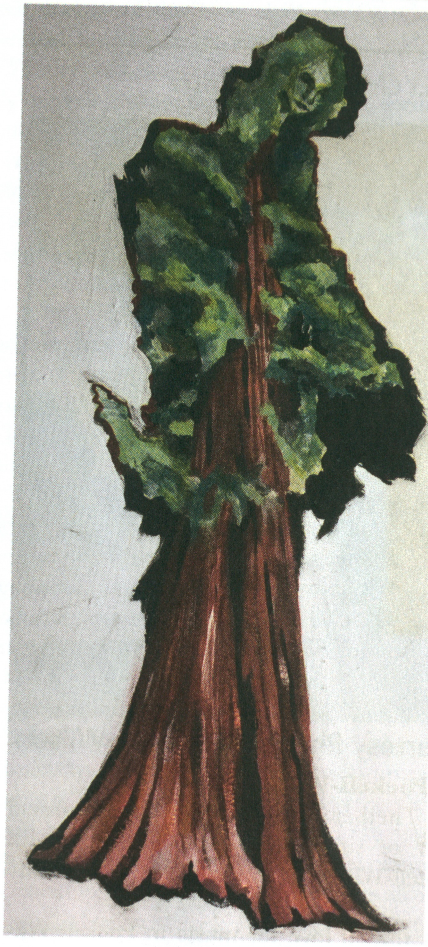
Kayli Harley | Online Editor-in-Chief

If I were to step outside right now, walk up to a redwood tree, and attempt to push it over, I would fail. Aside from the fact that a typical redwood tree is roughly 295 feet taller than me, I wouldn't be able to push a tree over because its roots hold it in place. People are like trees. We root ourselves in our beliefs, and if anyone tries to rip us from the ground, we hold firm.

I am just as guilty as everyone else. Over quarantine, as crisis after crisis occurred, I felt my roots grow deeper. As a result, coming back to school where not everyone agrees with my perspective on many issues has been a fundamental challenge. Even though most of my peers have similar political views as me, it can still feel like something is pushing on me, trying to knock me down.

We will always need our roots; they are the basis for how we view the world. But, our prejudice and stubbornness also lie within this framework. When we hold onto those things too tightly, we forfeit empathy. Now more than ever, unity appears impossible to achieve.

But, just because we perceive something as unachievable doesn't mean we shouldn't strive for it. The moment we stop working towards a better future is the moment we become paralyzed in the past. We have to ask ourselves if anyone can truly be content living monotonously. There are enough groundhog-day-like movies out there for me to infer that the answer is no. In the end, we need change even though it is uncomfortable. And the change we desperately need right now is to stop digging down and start reaching out.



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Do You Even Skate, Bro?

A swelling interest in skateboarding sweeps the nation, accompanied by a resurgence of local skate culture

Miles Thomas | Staff Writer

When famous skateboarding icons from across the globe stepped into the Japanese sun before the audience of the world, the future of skateboarding and its role in society changed forever.

A recent surge of attention in the media has greatly increased skateboarding's popularity.

The 2020 Olympics Committee recognizing skateboarding pushed the sport across the globe, including locally in the Lafayette community. This growing interest in the sport has resulted in a general uptake in the skateboarding market itself.

Many people are starting to enter the world of skateboarding by buying boards and other materials. The growth of skateboarding also led to increased support for the sport as a whole.

"I think it's pretty cool. We're finally getting the recognition we've wanted for years," senior Lukas Ross said.

Recently, large companies and businesses have been featuring skateboarding in a multitude of advertisements.

"There's way more people starting to skate and that's because of social media and TikTok, and it's starting to become a trend," Ross said.

Acalanes skaters are looking forward to the benefits that this new wave of exposure will have on their sport. Some hope to see skateboarding become an athletic program that is more hemmed into the school, similarly to basketball or football.

"I think if we were to be the first school in California to do that, it would be groundbreaking. We would probably be the school that kind of paves the way for that… I think that definitely could be in the future for sure," skate club advisor and Digital Design teacher Christopher Busse said.

Although there are students and faculty supporting and participating in the Olympic-created wave of attention towards skateboarding, there are those who feel differently. Not everybody believes that skateboarding and school should mix. Issues such as liability, injury, and funding could serve as large roadblocks on the path to making skateboarding a school sport.

Many skateboarders are upset about the negative stigmas surrounding their sport. Many feel that being kicked out of skating areas or being pinned as lowlifes are regular parts of being a skater.

"I mean, obviously, if I skate in Lafayette, there's gonna be a lot of people who are gonna want to kick [me] out," senior Chase Englehart said.

Many students feel that skateboarding is not only denounced at school, but also in the media. While the Olympics provided relief from the stereotyping that skaters often feel, the implications of popular media's portrayal of them can still feel harmful.

"We aren't as bad as the media says," freshman Colby Ebner said.

Despite the stigmas that remain, the sport of skateboarding is rapidly gaining popularity with no sign of stopping.

"I think it's pretty cool that skateboarding is getting more out there and people are realizing that it's more of a cool thing than a bad thing," Ebner said.

Blueprint Photo / Arlyne Noguera

The National Football League's Struggle with Player Morality

Griffin Ruebner | Sports Editor

RUEBNER'S rundown

Michael Vick, Ray Lewis, Adrian Peterson, Ray Rice. These names are just a small selection of National Football League (NFL) legends that struggled with legal issues during their professional careers.

A significantly large number of NFL players do not play out their full careers as punishment for choices they make in their personal lives. For example, 22 women accused star Houston Texans quarterback Deshaun Watson of assault in civil lawsuits in April 2021. Watson has not played in a game since the accusations.

In this case, the Texans were willing to lose their franchise star to do the morally right thing and support the women that spoke out against him. However, in years past, some teams factored in football skill when making decisions regarding law-breaking players.

The Kansas City Chiefs selected Kareem Hunt, a running back from the University of Toledo, in the third round of the 2017 NFL draft. Hunt would go on to lead the league in rushing that very year, showcasing his star potential to Chiefs fans. However, late in the 2018 NFL season, TMZ released hotel security camera footage of Hunt kicking and shoving a woman, prompting the Chiefs to hastily drop him from their roster.

However, in February of 2019, the Cleveland Browns signed Hunt despite the NFL's ongoing investigation into his actions. On top of the aforementioned footage, Hunt faced two other assault allegations at the time of his signing.

Today, Hunt is a key component of Cleveland's run game and is a strong player overall. While there was no rule against Cleveland signing Hunt, it seems unfair that the Chiefs lost a key component of their team to the Browns by making an ethical decision.

Hunt is just one example of how complicated sports become when athletics and moral dilemmas collide. Plenty of athletes in recent years have bounced from team to team as a result of issues off the field. In the case of Watson, trade rumors have been floating around the league for a long time, and numerous teams have expressed interest in acquiring him despite the legal hot-water he is in.

Another such problematic player is wide receiver Antonio Brown, who has been on the official roster of the Pittsburgh Steelers, the Oakland Raiders, the New England Patriots, and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers since 2017. Brown got into an altercation with a delivery driver, his trainer accused him of sexual assault, and he has had issues with skipping practices and fighting with teammates and coaches.

Josh Gordon, another wide receiver, checks similar boxes to Brown. The NFL has suspended Gordon five times for various violations of the league's substance abuse policy. Gordon has played for the Browns and the Seattle Seahawks, and he just signed with the Chiefs. The league only recently lifted Gordon's most recent suspension, which began back in 2019 and continued for over a year as a result of his failure to meet the terms of his conditional reinstatement.

Both Brown and Gordon were, and still are, incredibly talented athletes, but struggles outside of football complicated their lives. Their unprofessional actions in their personal lives nearly overshadowed their professional careers. Furthermore, the teams they played for were left to clean up the messes they made and figure out what to do in response to their mistakes.

I believe that in some cases, like with Hunt, the NFL should stop teams from signing players that are undergoing investigation to maintain fairness. There is already a league-wide exempt list that can force players into paid leave from their team without counting as a roster spot on the team's 53-man squad. However, there should be a way for the NFL to allow teams to take a stand against the wrongdoings of players without having to cut the player and watch them immediately join another team.

Another possibility to consider is the implementation of some sort of a three-strike rule or other policy that could deal with players with repeat violations of NFL codes of conduct. Players like Brown and Gordon do something wrong on one team but have the option to just jump to another. This system of seemingly unlimited chances, often with only mild suspensions as punishment, creates chaos, as athletes with star potential constantly relocate and drastically impact the playoff chances of teams.

The NFL should be about incredibly talented and hard-working athletes who entertain the nation with their skills every week, about. If the NFL could crack down on misbehavior, it would send a message to fans and players alike that the league will not tolerate illegal actions. The league must take a firm stand against players associated with criminal activities to clarify that football is not a place for them.

Golden State Warriors Players Giving Back to the Bay Area

Tom Bequette | Online Sports Editor

Over the last year, Golden State Warriors point guard Stephen Curry has helped provide over 16 million meals to families in need in Oakland. While that statistic is already incredible, it is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the team giving back to the local community.

Golden State Warriors players have helped countless families through donations and various types of philanthropic work. Nearly every player has contributed in some way over the past year, with methods ranging from starting organizations to playing in charity basketball tournaments.

Curry is a prime example of a philanthropically focused athlete. With his wife Ayesha, Curry co-founded the charity organization, Eat Learn Play. The foundation focuses on fighting childhood hunger, ensuring children access to quality education, and enabling healthy, active lifestyles. Eat Learn Play has donated over 17 million nutritious meals to in-need youth across the nation.

While Curry is one of the highest-paid players in the league, younger players with less lucrative contracts have also begun giving back in any way they can. Backup shooting guard Jordan Poole started his own organization called Jordan Poole's Academic All-Stars. The charity's main focus is to provide youth development programs, scholarships, and mentorships to disadvantaged inner-city youth in Milwaukee, Poole's hometown. Last year, Poole gave out 4,500 dollars in college scholarships, while also hosting basketball camps and book clubs for those without access to such resources.

It is impossible to list all of the team's charitable contributions to society, but there are more specific actions worth noting. Former National Basketball Association (NBA) All-Star Draymond Green donated 3.1 million dollars to his alma mater, Michigan State. All-star shooting guard Klay Thompson founded the Thompson Family Foundation, which funds youth sports across the Americas and the Bahamas. Also, Andrew Wiggins donated 69,000 dollars to the Redwood Credit Union North Bay Fire Relief Fund last year.

The Warriors coaching staff has also given back to the people of the Bay Area. Head coach Steve Kerr donated 600,000 dollars in the form of college scholarships in the East Bay.

The NBA as a whole has created a widespread culture of promoting charitable acts. For example, when NBA facilities shut down during the pandemic, multiple players, including rookie New Orleans Pelicans star Zion Williamson, pledged to cover the arena worker's salaries.

Some cite the pandemic as the primary reason for the increase in philanthropy in the NBA.

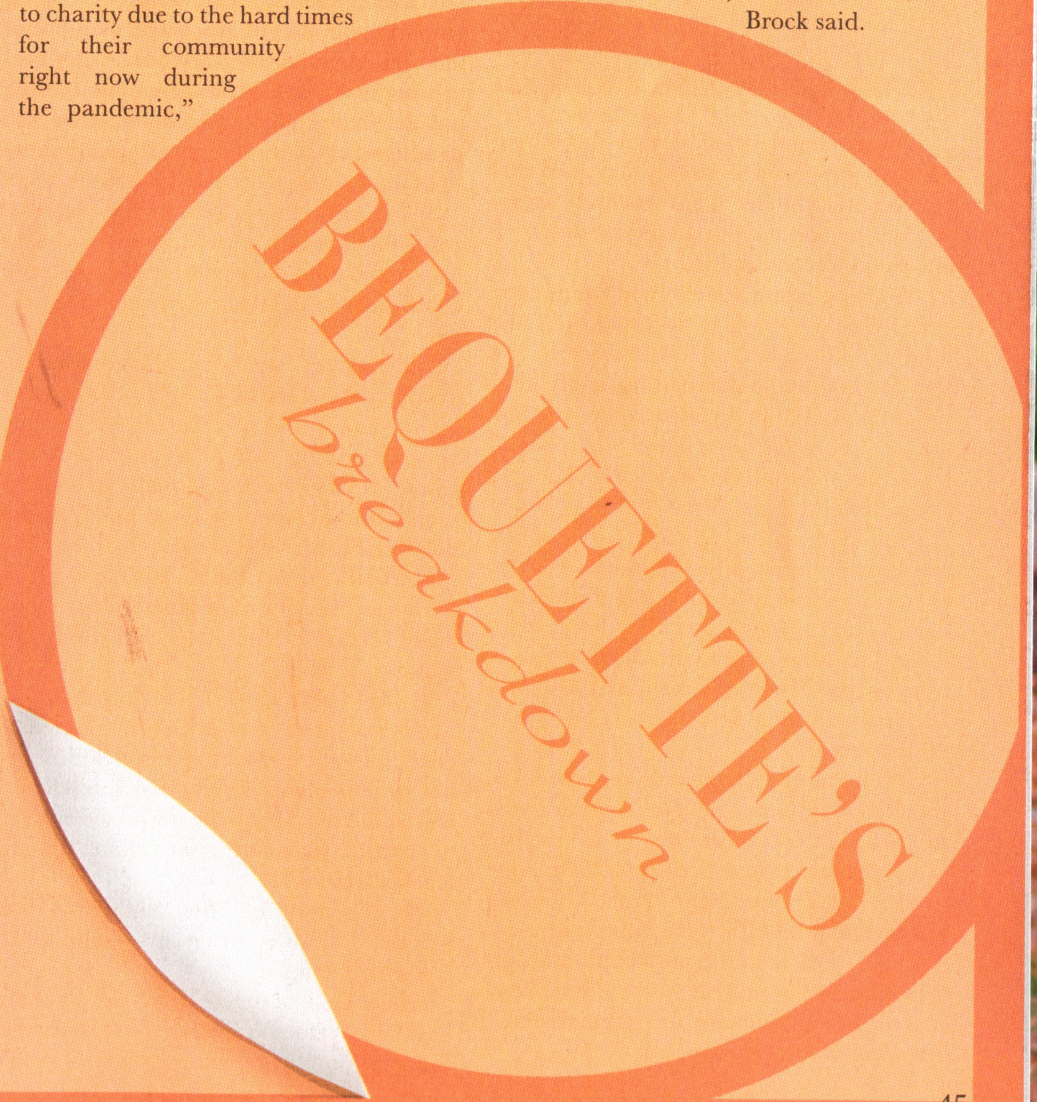
"I believe athletes are donating more to charity due to the hard times for their community right now during the pandemic," senior RC Means said. "Communities are facing greater risks, so they are donating more."

Another contributor may lie in the rise of connectivity due to the digital age, which allows charities and other causes to reach more people than ever before.

"29 percent of online donors say that social media is the communication tool that most inspires them to give," according to a survey conducted by Fundraise.org.

Athletes set an example for their thousands of loyal fans through their countless charitable works.

"I think it helps inspire fans in ways that many don't realize. Seeing a person of influence give back to the community inspires younger generations to do the same," senior Matthew Brock said.



Layouts by Arlyne Noguera

The Recognition Rift

Certain sports garner large amounts of attention while other sports remain in the shadows

Helen O'Neal, Gus McKinney, and Nastia Grits | Online Shadow Editor and Staff Writers

Blueprint Photos / Mara Korzeniowska

Excited students pour into the bleachers decked out with bright face paint and banners, buzzing with anticipation and awaiting the beginning of the night's football game. Meanwhile, on the other side of the school, athletes play a quiet tennis match while a parent-dominated crowd looks on.

While the school community strongly celebrates some sports, other athletes feel as though the school frequently overlooks their sports.

One common belief is that the school creates more excitement leading up to certain events, whether it is through funding, advertising, or various other methods of building up school spirit.

"Some sports are definitely overlooked compared to some more popular ones like football and basketball. That's not to say that football and basketball are sports that should not be appreciated, they are just appreciated a lot more than other ones," track and field athlete and senior Katrina Ortman said.

Publicity and advertising for sporting events can largely affect attendance rates. When the school promotes a game all over campus and through social media, it often results in larger turnouts for that game. Some games, especially for sports like football, have become social events on top of athletic events.

"It is just a part of the culture. It is not as much football, some people do go to watch football, but it is more about the environment that is created by the football game under the Friday night lights," football player and junior Zachary Robb said.

The lack of school representation at certain sporting events creates a less appealing social environment for some students, resulting in smaller turnouts.

"Some of the other sports, like water polo, lacrosse, or tennis, are generally just going to get the families of the players, and once in a while some of their friends... [they are] just not really sports that are going to bring out the school spirit, the cheerleaders, the band, and all of those things," junior varsity women's lacrosse coach Steve Seiler said.

Seeing empty bleachers can be disheartening for some athletes. Many of these athletes think that a greater crowd presence could positively affect their team's gameplay.

"Our players would benefit from having people in the stands that were not necessarily just family and friends. I think it would be great for the school itself to pick one game for each sport and really encourage the student community to go out and support their team," Seiler said.

Low athletic event attendance can greatly impact the spirits of some athletes and make them feel disconnected from the school as a whole.

"I play [golf, which is] a sport that does not get a lot of recognition compared to other sports. I feel a little less included and not as important as the other [athletes]. I feel like I am just playing for myself instead of actually playing for the school," junior Rachel Pan said.

On the contrary, other students do not feel that the different levels of support affect their gameplay.

"It is kind of up to what people want to watch. It doesn't really matter to me because as long as you are having fun with your sport it doesn't really matter who is watching you or how many people are watching you," tennis player and junior Drew Powell said.

Students have noted that they see women's sports garnering less enthusiasm than primarily men's sports teams.

"I think that there is definitely a bigger emphasis on guys' sports at Acalanes, or more traditionally masculine sports. When you think of a sport you want to watch, you think of football, basketball, soccer, you are probably not going to go watch volleyball or cheer or even tennis," Ortman said.

Not all people think that some sports are unfairly represented. The school tries to promote all sports in one way or another at some point throughout the school year.

"We do something for every single sport in every season. The spirit board attends the captain meetings [and] asks our varsity sports 'what is most important to you' or 'what do you want people to show up for'. Last week, [men's] water polo really wanted to get people to the Campo game, so the spirit board gave good luck stuff that got delivered to the water polo players," leadership teacher Katherine Walton said.

Although many athletes wish the school represented and promoted their sports better, they do not want it to take away from the representation of other sports.

"I don't think that popular sports need to be less popular... my point is just that I want other sports to be enjoyed just as much, not one or the other," Ortman said.

Football

Miles Thomas | Staff Writer

The football team continues their explosive season (4-2 overall, 0-1 league), setting their sights on the playoffs.

The team played Damonte Ranch on Sept. 17, suffering their first defeat of the season by a score of 31-30. Acalanes reached the end zone four times, with senior Dante Montgomery finding his way across the goal line twice. In the end, a fourth-quarter field goal and a late-game interception by Damonte stifled a building Dons comeback.

Acalanes won in a landslide against Castlemont on Oct. 1 with an impressive score of 56-18. The Dons scored a total of eight touchdowns, with senior Will Berrien and sophomore Trevor Rogers each scoring two. The team also saw numerous contributions from second and third-string players, who were able to shine on the field as a result of the early Acalanes lead.

On Oct. 8, the Dons lost to Las Lomas in their first league game, 35-34. Acalanes tried to put together a game-winning drive late in the fourth quarter, but they could not capitalize on a long field goal attempt.

Despite the team's strong start and favorable record, players are staying focused on their upcoming games and not letting off the gas pedal.

"We can't get over our heads, and we need to be disciplined, and we need to stay humble throughout the season because if we keep on thinking that we're gonna roll over teams it's just not gonna work, and that's not how we're gonna win league and state," captain and senior Evan Malmquist said.

As the team captain, Malmquist serves a very special role. According to his teammates, he encourages and uplifts the other athletes and acts as a mentor. His job requires a great deal of discipline, hard work, commitment, and care.

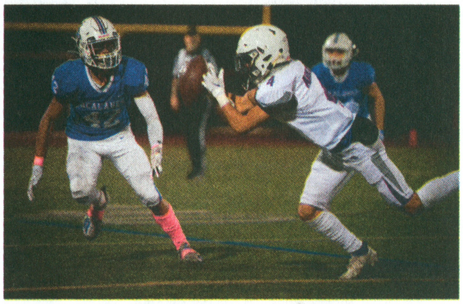
"Whenever somebody doesn't know or doesn't understand [something] I'll take my time out of my day to go and support them and help them," Malmquist said.

Veterans and captains alike see it as their responsibility to support those who are new to the team and to prioritize building a strong community over all else. They believe a welcoming atmosphere will provide the strongest foundation for an outstanding team. Team bonding is an integral part of developing team chemistry. Some players view the football program as more of a brotherhood than a team.

"It not only helps make friends off the field, it translates to the field to help you play better and have fun," junior Victor Nicolacakis said.

Only time will tell how much this year's star-studded football team will truly accomplish.

"This year I see something special, [like] potentially winning league and potentially winning state," Malmquist said.



Blueprint Photo / Graham Klingler

Men's Water Polo

Ben Brekke | Staff Writer

After a slow start to the year, the men's water polo team (3-5 overall, 1-3 league) has started to turn their season around.

Coming off a 16-11 win against Saint Ignatius, the team faced an unexpected break from games. Due to personal reasons, Heritage coaches canceled their match with Acalanes.

However, the Dons were well-practiced and ready to take down Las Lomas on Sept. 22. Acalanes suffered a large loss when junior Andrew Sappal pulled a muscle in his calf near the end of the second quarter. However, the team still pulled off a victory, winning 11-8.

Sappal has continued to practice and play despite the injury, but he has not been able to perform to the same extent and often does not stay in the pool for the entirety of games.

"They're still doing well," Sappal said. "But it's hard to watch them play and know I can't do anything to help".

Being one of the team's star players, Sappal left a large role for the team to fill while he recovers. However, he still has a positive attitude about the situation.

"I'm really looking forward to being able to play at [my] full potential soon," Sappal said.

On Sept. 28, the Dons matched up against San Ramon Valley. A frustrating first half led to an uphill struggle for Acalanes, and the Dons were unable to close the gap, losing the game 11-13.

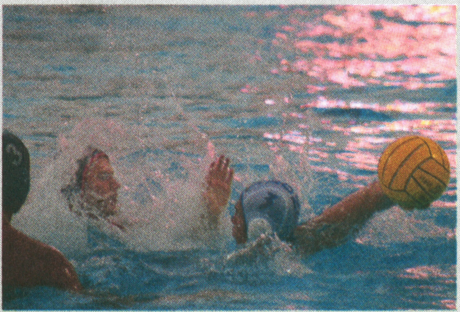
The next day, on Sept. 29, the team played rival school Campolindo. After the first half of play, Acalanes was down 2-3, and they ultimately lost 5-8. However, players still found the silver lining of the match.

"We have always been blown out by Campo," Sappal said. "It was the first time we've had a close game since I've been here."

As the season reaches its halfway point, the team has nothing but good things to say about their recent games.

"Our games have been going well lately. We have had good, close games with really good teams. I think we have given ourselves confidence with our recent games," senior Kyle Rosenblatt said.

On Oct. 6, the Dons faced Miramonte at home. The team struggled to get much going their way throughout their match, and they ultimately lost 9-4.



Blueprint Photo / Mara Korzeniowska

Despite a few recent losses, the team's future schedule offers opportunities for redemption in upcoming games. The Dons will face Las Lomas on Oct. 13 and Campolindo on Oct. 20 in two league games that will have important playoff implications.

"We are still building up to our peak," Rosenblatt said. "We have mostly league games ahead, which are definitely the most exciting. I think you will definitely see us in the playoffs too."

Women's Water Polo

Lulu Levy | Staff Writer

As the women's water polo team (10-5 overall, 2-1 league) reaches the halfway point of their season and begins to gear up for the playoffs, players prepare for more competitive matchups.

After a strong start to the season, the team suffered a setback on Sep. 11, losing to both Campolindo and Davis.

However, the team quickly bounced back against Monte Vista with a 16-4 victory on Sep. 21. Team captain and senior Heidi Heffelfinger scored seven goals on the path to victory.

The team recently began their league schedule, playing games that determine key rankings for the playoffs. Acalanes was able to come out strong in their first league game on Sep. 22 against Las Lomas in a 14-8 victory, led by the defensive play of goalie and junior Audrey Cox, who had 9 blocks.

Over the weekend of Sep. 24, the team competed in the Amanda MacDonald Invitational, an away tournament at Menlo Park. They started the tournament strong, overpowering Presentation, Heritage, and Los Altos in their first three games. After reaching the finals, they ultimately lost a tough match to rival Miramonte by a score of 9-5.

In a tight game on Sep. 29 against Campolindo, Acalanes won after junior Sarah Potter scored a tie-breaking goal in overtime.

Taking on Miramonte proved a challenge for the Dons again on Oct. 6. After putting up a strong performance, the team was unable to defeat their rivals, losing 11-4.

Though this season's athletes are from various grade levels, the girls have a strong group dynamic and excellent team spirit. On game days you can spot the players in fun, coordinated costumes.

"Everyone is super close. We all do things for dress-up days which are super fun… I love having the freshman volunteer to wear fun outfits," Cox said.

With playoff seedings at stake, players are preparing for exciting and critical games against strong teams. One of these upcoming games is senior night against Campolindo on Oct. 20.

"We are playing against Campo and Miramonte coming up, so we are preparing for those and getting geared up for some strong competition," head coach Misha Buchel said.

The team anticipates that teamwork will be a key component in their future success.

"We approach rival games by focusing a lot more mental energy on the game to keep ourselves calm, focused, and connected. Everyone has a different role, and I feel like we do a great job of playing to everyone's strengths. We function as one, and I think it shows," sophomore Olivia Williams said.

Blueprint Photo / Lulu Levy

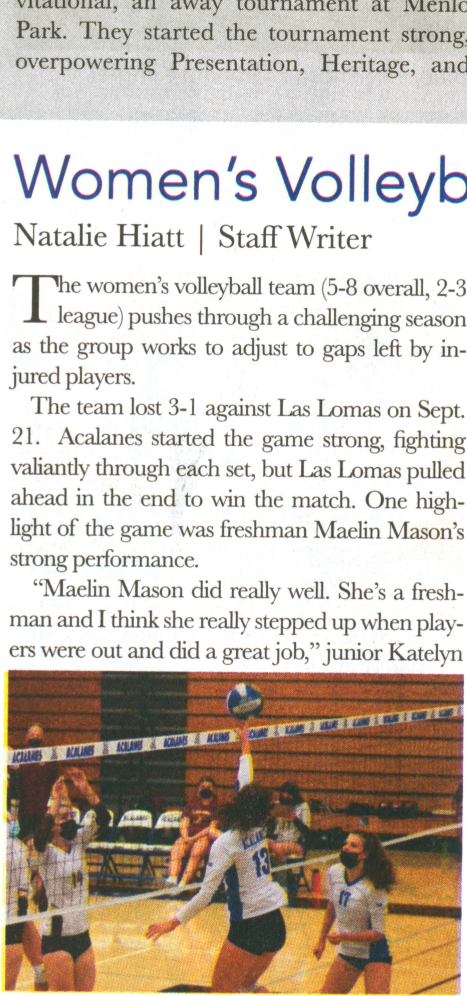
Women's Volleyball

Natalie Hiatt | Staff Writer

The women's volleyball team (5-8 overall, 2-3 league) pushes through a challenging season as the group works to adjust to gaps left by injured players.

The team lost 3-1 against Las Lomas on Sept. 21. Acalanes started the game strong, fighting valiantly through each set, but Las Lomas pulled ahead in the end to win the match. One highlight of the game was freshman Maelin Mason's strong performance.

"Maelin Mason did really well. She's a freshman and I think she really stepped up when players were out and did a great job," junior Katelyn Olin said.



Blueprint Photo / Kylie Choi

To fill the holes injured players left in the varsity roster, the Dons added two sophomores, Jade Profilio and Monika Dikova, to the varsity team. Both of the sophomores noted the different feel of varsity compared to junior varsity.

"It's definitely different. I mean it's a lot more competitive, and playing with juniors and seniors means moving at a quicker pace," Profilio said.

The Dons' second match against Northgate on Sept. 23 marked a promising upturn in the team's season, as Acalanes defeated the Broncos 3-1. The team fought hard for the victory, keeping their energy high and their serves consistent and well-placed. Senior Aly Kirke played particularly well, with numerous blocks and kills that bolstered the team's lead.

Acalanes beat Alhambra by a score of 3-0 on Sept. 28. The team started off hot in the first set, giving few points to the other team. The second set was tighter, but an amazing display of hitting managed to keep the Dons in the lead.

The team's game against Campolindo on Sept. 30 was a tough loss for the Dons, who dropped the match 0-3. However, players remain confident that as they improve their consistency, their rivals will have a challenging time beating them in the future.

"We aren't very far behind as a team, but they just outplayed us... we just need to work on playing hard the whole game, and we'll have a better shot," junior Hanna Hageboeck said.

Miramonte defeated the Dons 0-3 on Oct. 6. Acalanes began strong, but after four consecutive missed serves, the team's energy took a crushing blow and their performance faltered.

The Dons' rematches against their two biggest rivals are coming up. They play at Miramonte on Oct. 13, and at home against Campolindo on Oct. 19.

The close bond among the girls fosters a strong team spirit, which is necessary on their path to victory.

"Right now, [our greatest strength] is that it really feels like a team. The past two years, it hasn't really, but this year, we're more connected. We're more cohesive and willing to do whatever it takes together to be more successful, and that's really going to help us when we get to NCS," head coach Haley Walsh said.

Women's Tennis

Abbey Palmer | Staff Writer

The Acalanes women's tennis team (2-3 overall, 2-1 league) starts off their regular season strong.

On Sept. 9 the team lost a practice match to Mission San Jose by a score of 2-7. Another preseason match against rival Campolindo on Sept. 14 resulted in a 0-9 loss for the Dons. Acalanes then battled Redwood on Sept. 15, losing 1-8 in one final preseason match.

After a streak of practice match losses, the team defeated Northgate in their first regular season game by a score of 8-1 on Sept. 21. This win set the team up for a more successful rest of the year.

In the Northgate game, junior Cate Condy was the player of the match. Junior Martha Burns won her singles match after a late-game take-over where she dominated in the final two sets.

Junior Analese Ruczynski also brought the team a valuable victory against her Northgate opponent, dominating the first two sets.

"My baseline game was really good and my serve was really on it today," Ruczynski said.

Continuing their winning streak, the team added a victory against College Park 8-1 on Sept. 23. Cate Condy was the player of the match once again.

Senior Ella Morris also brought in a solid win for the Dons, beating her opponent 6-2 and 6-3.

On Sept. 28, Acalanes lost a close match to Las Lomas, 4-5. Junior Kai Kai Broad and freshman Siena Moise beat their Knights opponents in their doubles game, winning the first two sets 7-5 and 6-2.

"I think I played okay, I had some good volleys, but some of my groundstrokes weren't so great," Broad said.

Moise is among the few freshmen on the varsity team, and she appreciates the opportunities she gets while playing with older athletes.

"I think the chemistry of the team is really inclusive and fun," Moise said.

The team lost 9-0 to Campolindo on Sept. 30. However, the girls bounced back and secured an 8-1 win against rival Miramonte on Oct. 5.

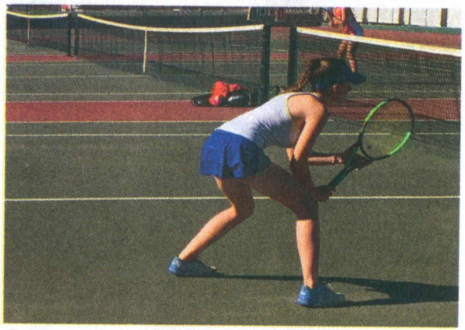
On Oct. 7 the Dons crushed Northgate 9-0, and sophomore Lilou Picard and freshman Lucy O'Brien were the players of the match. Picard and O'Brien prevailed against their Northgate doubles opponents in three sets. The girls won their first set, lost their second set, and finished strong with an excellent victory in the final set.

Players on the team enjoy connecting with each other as they play.

"We have had some team bondings, such as going to Yogurt Shack after a practice and having a team dinner. We always make sure to cheer for one another and it's great to spend time with the team," junior Marcela Wisniewka said.

While the team is playing well already, the players are already looking to the future and preparing for challenges to come.

"I'm excited to see what the rest of the season will hold," Moise said.



Courtesy Photo / Ella Morris

Cross Country

Reid Aldrich | Staff Writer

Coming off of a strong performance in their first meet, the cross country team looks to continue their success in the next leg of their season.

On Sept. 18 at the Nike Invitational, the women's team finished fifth overall. Sophomore Olivia Williams led the girls with a time of 17:35 (17 minutes and 35 seconds). The men's team finished twenty-first overall, and junior Tyler Hunt had the fastest Acalanes time at 15:59 (15 minutes and 59 seconds).

Sophomore Logan Farzan improved significantly at the Nike Invitational, finishing second out of all Acalanes runners with a time of 17:05 (17 minutes and five seconds). Farzan is new to high school cross country, but he is already showcasing his talent and potential.

"It was my first real high school three mile, and all things considered, I managed to run a great time," Farzan said.

The higher placement from Farzan along with a strong performance from senior Loic Windfuhr-Durand helped the Acalanes men's team place twenty-first.

At the Diablo Athletic League Center's first meet on Sept. 29, the Acalanes men's team, led by Hunt's fourth place time of 16:15 (16 minutes and 15 seconds), placed fourth overall. The women's team, led by Olivia Williams' second place finish at 18:04 (18 minutes and four seconds), placed second overall.

Coach Eric Morford is happy with what he has seen from the team so far, and he hopes the athletes will continue to quicken their times.

"I'm impressed with the group. They started out the year stronger than I anticipated. We have some younger runners that definitely have shown some promise. The most important thing is that we have had improvement across the board," Morford said.

While cross country may seem like an individual sport, it is very important to have a cohesive, dynamic team in order to place well at meets and other events. Everyone on the team can contribute towards a school victory in their own way.

With such a long season, injuries are somewhat common. Morford and the other coaches help the runners learn ways to prevent injuries, as well as ways to rehab from previous injuries.

"Recently, we have gotten better post-run. We are making sure that they are stretching or doing foam rolling. That should help their muscles relax and recover as best as possible, so that they can stay healthy throughout the rest of the season," Morford said.

Courtesy Photo / Eric Morford

If the cross country team can maintain their health, they are on track for an excellent rest of their season and a strong finish to the year.

" If we were to put any goals out there, the coaches want to have pretty good success at league championships. Our varsity teams are looking strong this year. I believe that this team, both girls and boys varsity, can make the state meet this year," Morford said.

Women's Golf

Ruby Deeming | Staff Writer

The women's golf team (5-4 overall, 3-4 league) qualifies for the North Coast Section (NCS) for the first time in ten years.

The team showcased their talents with a commanding victory over Las Lomas on Sept. 16, defeating the Knights 222-248. Guided by juniors Makena Chelemedos and Kendal Geddes, the team's outstanding communication skills and inclusivity pushed them to success.

"I love everyone on the team, it's been really fun. And everyone's been really welcoming too," junior Sophi MacKay said.

Blueprint Photo / Ruby Deeming

Like a few others on the team, MacKay only recently started playing golf for Acalanes, but is easing into the season confidently. The assistance of her teammates and coaches helps to prepare her, and the rest of the team, for NCS.

"I'm new to coaching golf, I'm new to this group of kids. The girls' golf team had not won a match in a while and we've already won four," co-coach Ken Lorge said.

The team demonstrated its skill again on Sept. 23, defeating Campolindo 223-236. Freshman Hana Chelemedos achieved her best score of the season with 45 strokes. The challenging course tested the team's dexterity, but they still came out on top.

"It's enjoyable to hang out with friends. And it's also nice to see improvement. I've been scoring much lower than last year," freshman Hana Chelmedos said.

The team dynamic has differed from past years. As a result of new coaches and freshmen entering the program, the team's scores have substantially improved from previous seasons.

"Hana Chelemedos is only a freshman and she scored her best score at her last match," junior Emmi Cronin said.

Another match took place on Sept. 29 at Northgate's home course. The Broncos narrowly defeated the Dons by a score of 233-241.

The team faced Campolindo on Oct. 4 and beat the Cougars yet again, winning 235-262. This match officially secured a spot for the Dons at NCS.

"You have to finish .500, meaning you've won as many matches as you've lost or better [to qualify]," Lorge said.

There is a league tournament occurring on Oct. 15 that will determine seeding going into NCS.

"I think we're doing really well. We've won [five] matches. And [we qualified] for NCS. First time in ten years," Cronin said.

Cheer

Melina Nath | Staff Writer

Decked out in royal blue and white, the cheer team reassembles for the 2021-2022 school year, helping to create an explosive atmosphere at athletic events.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, cheer participation dwindled, and only six people were on the varsity team. However, this year's cheer squad looks at this season with optimism as they continue to support other student athletes.

The cheer team performs at football games every Friday. At the football game against Damonte Ranch on Sept. 17, the team showed off an eye-catching routine. Two freshmen from junior varsity cheered with the varsity squad for the night.

"I couldn't be more proud of them. They are both freshmen and were able to pick up the dance in one practice, which is crazy," co-team captain and junior Alyssa Fong said.

The cheerleaders also perform at school events, such as the homecoming rally on Oct. 1. In addition, the cheer team electrified the crowd with their routine during the homecoming football game against Castlemont.

These stunning performances are in part a result of strong team chemistry. The cheerleaders participated in bonding experiences over the summer, laying the foundation for the new season.

"We go to camp every year and that's really where most of the bonding happens. It made it a lot easier to have fun together. Now, during practices, the laughs and the fun just comes naturally," co-team captain and senior Trinity Conway said.

Cheerleaders express that bonding is vital to strengthen team dynamics, and cheer depends on team trust.

"Trusting each other is really important in cheer, especially while we're stunting. Not only does the flyer have to trust the bases enough to get thrown around by us, but we also have to trust ourselves and each other's abilities," Conway said.

Trust allows the cheer team to perform a variety of entertaining yet risky stunts. Unfortunately, cheerleaders are on the receiving end of a fair amount of injuries while creating performances for crowds.

"Stunts are where most injuries are common since you're either being put in the air or you're the people doing the lifting. Bases and backs receive the majority of the injuries because if a stunt goes wrong, it's their job to make sure the flyers don't hit the ground. It results in [the] flyers landing on top of them," Fong said.

Regardless of any pressure, the cheer team performs confidently each Friday, excited to have a crowd once again.

"Having people in the stands is amazing, especially since last year we were really only cheering to some parents since [the] student body wasn't allowed to attend. It's really exciting and such a mood booster when you see your crowd participating in cheers and chants," Fong said.

Blueprint Photo / Melina Nath

Athletes of the Issue

By Mason Archer | Liaison Editor

LANES
ACALANES
ACALANES
bring your
A
game

Blueprint Photo / Mara Korzeniowska

Kyle Rosenblatt

Aiming to recover from a difficult 2020 season, senior star and team captain Kyle Rosenblatt led the men's water polo team to a strong start early on in 2021.

The Dons suffered a 13-8 defeat to De La Salle in their season opener but quickly bounced back with a 14-6 win over Foothill the following game.

On Sept. 4, the Dons tallied their second loss of the season, 13-8, in an early morning game against Menlo. They recovered later that day in their second game, defeating the St. Ignatius Wildcats 16-11. Rosenblatt led the team as a prominent goal scorer and a stamina-filled machine.

Rosenblatt's experience and supportive nature continue to be a large contributor to the team's success.

"Kyle is a very tactical player," senior Eli Berkowitz said. "He gives advice to teammates on how to improve in a supportive way."

On Sept. 22, Rosenblatt successfully pushed the Dons to an overall winning record of 3-2 after an 11-8 win against Las Lomas. However, the streak only lasted a few days before the Dons dropped losses to both San Ramon Valley and Campolindo.

Despite the turbulent season the men's team is starting to adjust to, Rosenblatt's veteran leadership remains an important component in the team's future.

"Kyle is a leader for the team in and outside of the pool with the good attitude he contributes," senior Zack Benisek said.

Beyond his athletic ability in the pool, Rosenblatt's character continues to play an important role in fostering a positive team environment this season.

"Kyle is always a guy you can talk to whether or not it's about the sport. He always puts his teammates' wants and desires first," Berkowitz said.

Ryann Jones

As the regular season comes to a close, the women's volleyball team prepares for a difficult NCS run led by junior co-captain Ryann Jones.

After suffering consecutive losses in the first few games of the season, on Sept. 11 the Dons bounced back in tournament play, recording two shutout wins over Sonoma Valley and Deer Valley. Jones led the team in the early stages of the tournament and she continues to play a pivotal role.

"Ryann is one of our two on-court captains, and sometimes [she] plays all-around outside hitter. She's consistent technically and also a great teammate," senior Rachel Zhang said.

Following the tournament, the Dons suffered a 3-1 loss to Las Lomas, but the team quickly forgot about the defeat, as Jones rallied the team to victory over Northgate and Pittsburgh.

Jones' strong presence is vital on the court, and her energetic personality keeps the team in high spirits at all times.

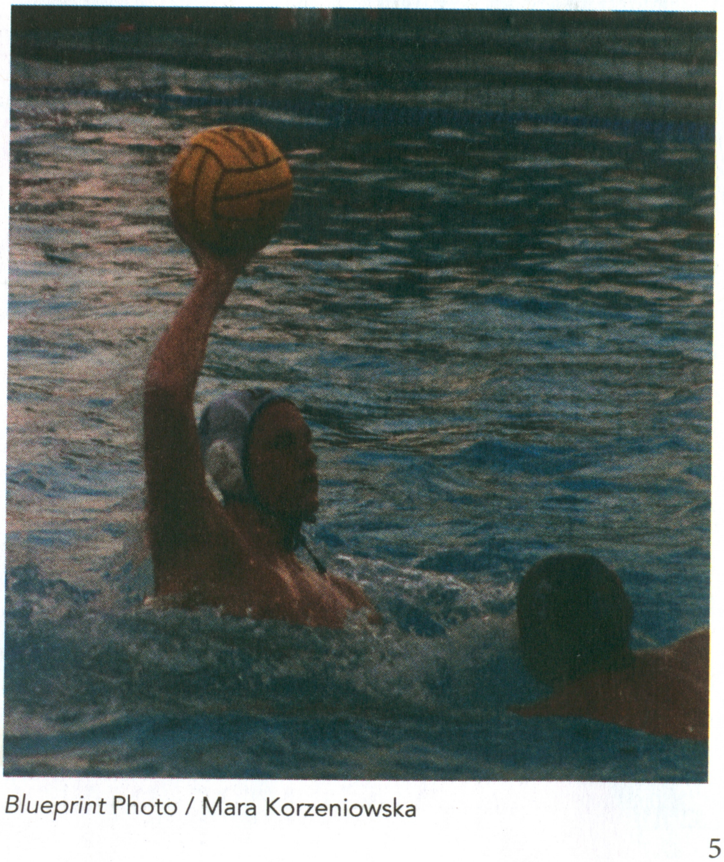
"She is a very energetic teammate. She is the type that randomly dances, screams, sings, and just gets everyone laughing," senior Gianna Manzone said.

Jones combines her exciting personality with an undeniably strong work ethic.

"She is a very hardworking player as well," Manzone said.

As a junior, Jones is in a unique position, as she will likely continue her role as a captain next year. Her veteran experience will likely be an important component in the team's success in the 2022 season.

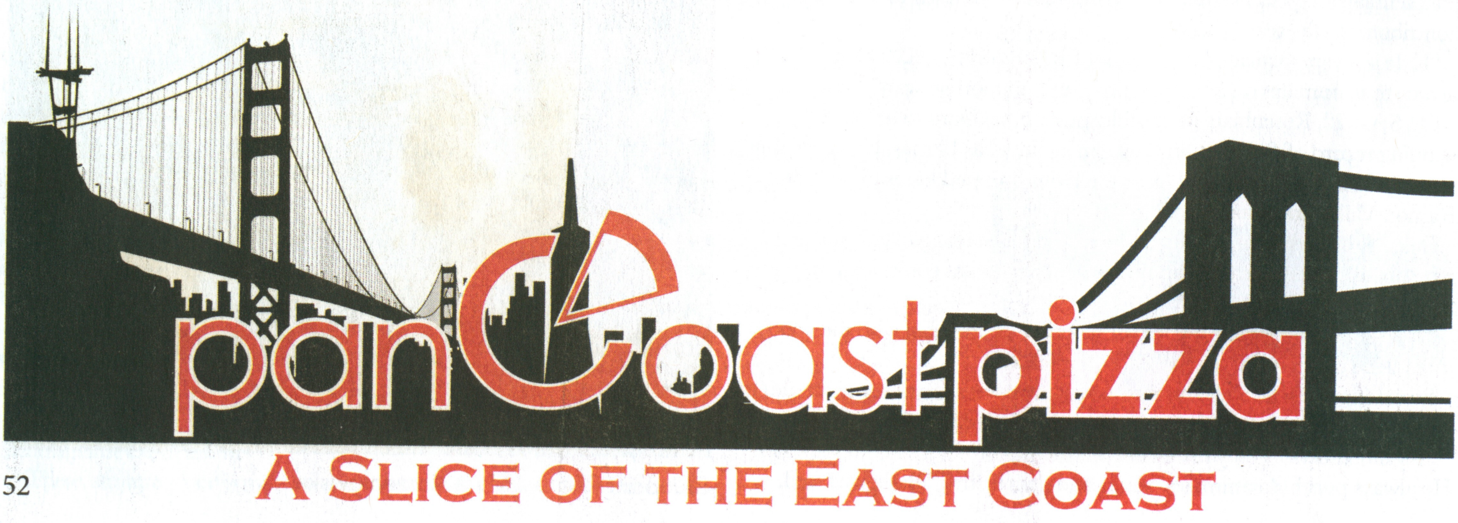
"She will provide valuable insight and leadership to the underclassmen on varsity next year, especially as she is already on the team this year," Zhang said.



Blueprint Photo / Mara Korzeniowska

Getting To Know Your Varsity Athletes

Athlete	If you could live anywhere for a year, where would it be?	What is your favorite song or album right now?	What is the best dish you can cook?	What is a movie you think everyone should watch?	Which teammate would you bring to a zombie apocalypse?
Luke Souza *Football*	Costa Rica	*If You're Reading This It's Too Late* by Drake	Chicken alfredo	Rudy	Ryan Giorgiani
Heidi Heffelfinger *Women's Waterpolo*	Australia	*Mango Tree* by Zac Brown Band	Ice cream sundaes	Mamma Mia	Anybody but Audrey Cox
Eli Berkowitz *Men's Waterpolo*	Puerto Rico	*San San Rock* by Thievery Corporation	Jamaican Jerk Chicken	Pirates of the Caribbean: Black Pearl	Griffy Gamblin
Rachel Zhang *Women's Volleyball*	Singapore	*Duvet* by Bôa	Chicken Curry	Ratatouille	Maelin Mason because she's ripped
Loïc Windfuhr-Durand *Cross Country*	Istanbul	*Certified Lover Boy* by Drake	Chicken Quesadillas	Avatar	Bennett Dodge
Avery Bahl *Women's Tennis*	New York City	*The Spins* by Mac Miller	Kale Salad	Lion King	Jojo Bishop because she'd be the first one eaten and I would survive



panCoast pizza
A SLICE OF THE EAST COAST

Photo of the Issue | Arlyne Noguera

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